

The politics of representing the international: International society and the Russian World

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

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Summary

This thesis, rising from the field of reflexive International Relations (IR), is an engagement with knowledge production in the domain of international relations. Guided by sociology of knowledge, it offers a critique of representations of the international produced by IR theory and practice. The thesis argues that such representations may gain power to frame the thinking and policy action with respect to objects beyond their immediate description. In my work I expose how thinking about international relations in particular ways affects conceptions of and policies implemented with regard to the state.

I focus specifically on the idea of international society developed by International Relations theory and the idea of international community, flourishing in policy practice. Both are contrasted with representations of the international produced in Russia with particular reference to the idea of the Russian World.

The idea of international society and the cognate concept of international community reinforce the production of universal norms and standards of what a state is and should be. They are conducive to thinking about a state in terms of well-functioning institutions allowing it to meet *international* standards and to form part of the society of states. The idea of the Russian World, in turn, facilitates the portrayal of Russia as a polity greater than a state and helps legitimize disregard for the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states. Constructing the international in terms of a confrontation between the Russian World and the West requires efforts to strengthen a polity transcending Russian borders.

In the broader scheme, the research project is dedicated to thinking through similarities in the processes of knowledge production cutting across easily permeable boundaries between the academia and policy practice, the West and Russia.

Contents

Summary	iv
Contents	v
Acknowledgments	vii
CHAPTER 1 Introduction: In search of a vantage point on the international	1
Research problem and objectives	4
Argument	8
Sociology of knowledge and international relations	10
Inspirations for a sociology-of-knowledge approach to IR	14
Producing knowledge and the contentious divide between the theory and practice of IR	17
Engagement with and contribution to the literature	22
Methodology – the experience of reflexive IR	25
Methods and localities	28
Language and critical analysis of texts	29
Reflexive ethnography	31
Chapter outline	33
Limitations and implications for further study	35
CHAPTER 2 The idea of international society reified and its implications for the state	38
Introduction: engaging with the idea of international society	38
The invention of IR theory and the expansion of international society	40
‘What is international society?’	43
Solidarism and ‘agential’ international society	48
Further steps in reification: theorizing, mapping and teaching	55
The right kind of state member	59
Conclusion: international society reified	66
CHAPTER 3 The world as international community and the imperative to build states	69
Introduction	69
The production of international community discourse	70
International community and statebuilding: ideas in action	72
Imagining the world and its states	74
The right kind of state: models and standards	82
Agential international community	85
Conclusions: the embodiment of the idea of international community	87
CHAPTER 4 Russia: a different vision of the international	89
Introduction	89

The world eyes Russia or <i>Oni o nas</i>	90
Portraying the international: the sources of Russia's view on international politics	93
Historical experience and interpretation	94
Soviet scholarship	97
Studying and speaking about international politics	101
Contemporary representations of international politics: multipolarity and the victory of the Russian World	104
Russia's internationalized identity	105
Russkii mir	108
Unipolarity, multipolarity	110
The international as the realm of competition and confrontation	115
Western-oriented view of the international?	118
Conclusion: the Russian World and implications for the idea of international society	119
CHAPTER 5 Russia: the state in Russia's representation of the international	122
Introduction	122
The Russian state	123
The evolving vision of a strong state	125
The post-Soviet space: a state 'not quite foreign'	130
Practical engagement: building more than a Russian state	133
No 'model Russia'	134
Eurasian integration	134
Development aid: everything but statebuilding	137
Intervention	139
The case of Kyrgyzstan	140
Conclusion	144
CHAPTER 6 Conclusion: The <i>fairyland of ideas</i> – knowledge production and potent representations of the international	145
Representations of the international and their bearing on the state	147
Similarities in the process of knowledge production: the West and Russia	149
Theory and practice and their representations of the international	154
Knowledge production and a political myth	157
Viewpoints and the limits of theorising	163
Afterword	169
Bibliography	171

Acknowledgments

Suleyman-Too, a mountain rising abruptly from the surrounding plains of the Ferghana Valley in Central Asia, has for centuries been a place of special importance for local people and for those visiting: merchants, scholars, pilgrims and adventurers. Considered sacred, it has been worshipped over several millennia and inspired an array of myths. It was probably in its vicinities where I first thought of the academia as a dream vocation. Back then I was deeply puzzled by statebuilding processes taking place in Kyrgyzstan. The subject of this dissertation evolved significantly since that time but my thinking would have never developed in the way that it has, had it not been for my manifold experiences in Central Asia, in particular my engagement with students from different Central Asian states, who challenged me to think how approaching international politics from the ‘East’ and from the ‘West’ alters profoundly what can be seen.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction: In search of a vantage point on the international

Cartography is held to be the branch of human activity which reflects the perception of the world in different time periods. Maps have always performed a variety of functions and served specific needs. As research tools, they have assisted in the comprehension of spatial phenomena and have been regarded as the depository of *knowledge*.¹ Their purely utilitarian purpose has been to facilitate navigation, to guide from one place to the next, while providing information about the surroundings. Their less overt function, however, has been no less important. Maps have been used to represent a particular vision of the world, to illustrate a historical narrative and to position the map's author or commissioner in the world in a specific way. One prominent example of a map which celebrated its paymasters was the terrestrial globe commissioned by the emperor Charles V and engraved by famous cartographer Gerard Mercator. Its main aim was to clearly outline the international reach of Habsburg imperial power. Cartographic propaganda and manipulation, to use Jerry Brotton's apt terminology, has been profuse. Political appropriation of maps was a common phenomenon as they were used for conquest and, once an area was claimed, to show off possessions. They were instruments of imperial administration, a device in wielding economic power as well as an indispensable tool of national self-determination and identity building.²

Mapmaking has been an activity common to every culture, although, as noted by experts in the history of maps, every culture has a distinctive way of mapping its particular world. There are also many different approaches to mapping the same area since maps usually answer specific needs of their intended audience. Despite this seeming plurality, there has been no scarcity of pretenders to the title of the *perfect map*-maker. Cartographers' claims to have created the ideal map rest not only on their ambition to present a *true* description but also on the goal of creating a map which would be *aesthetically pleasing*, imaginative, stimulating the experience of actually being at the depicted place.

Throughout history some map authors, particularly those following the Greek tradition, have been using science to validate their claims for the maps' authenticity. Others resorted to

¹ N. J. W. Thrower, *Maps and civilization: cartography in culture and society*, 3rd ed., Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press: 2007.

² J. Brotton, *A history of the world in twelve maps*, London: Allen Lane: 2012, 226-227, 385.

theology to provide orientation and to make their point.³ Modern maps pretend to be *correct* on the grounds of their reliance on science and technology but they, too, may hide a specific agenda going beyond practical navigational purposes. Too often do we tend to forget that maps are always subjective and reflect on specific historical contexts and ideologies. In addition to a graphical depiction of an area, maps present a *worldview*. Through the combination of ambition, purposefulness and ideology maps have the power to arrange the world in specific ways. Another Mercator's project, which for over 400 years had retained hegemony over our geographical imagination, is the projection of the world placing Europe as its centre, thereby distorting the size of other continents.⁴

Popular perceptions of maps matter. Due to the process of their scientific validation as well as through the work of aesthetics, we tend to have confidence in maps. The mapping of Liberland can serve as a very recent illustration of a map's power to reorder the landscape. Several outlets have published a map of Central Europe depicting the state of Liberland on the border between Serbia and Croatia. Liberland is a political fiction, a performance arranged by a Czech politician but the fact of its visual portrayal on a map made it into an almost material entity. Not only did it stir imagination but it affected consciousness, arranged the perception of political reality. Liberland has been represented on a map published by *The Guardian* newspaper, in Wikipedia and on Liberland's official webpage. Since its announcement, the state received several hundred thousand citizenship applications. Though its mapping cannot be claimed to be the single cause, materiality rendered by the practice of its representation on a map, did play a role in producing some sort of Liberland's political influence.

³ J. Brotton, *Great maps*, London: Dorling Kindersley: 2014, 7.

⁴ The Mercator projection map, which origins date back to 1569, placed the mapmaker's country, in this case, Germany, at the centre of the map. The Equator was placed two-thirds of the way down the map rather than halfway down. The result of such arrangement was the representation of Europe as larger than South America and Greenland larger than China. For a more nuanced discussion of the Mercator projection, see: Brotton, *A history of the world in twelve maps*, 379.



Figure 1 Examples of maps constituting Liberland as part of Central European political landscape⁵

In addition to maps' power to influence political landscapes, cartographic depictions have catered to yet another important human ambition – the aspiration to picture the *whole* world. Capturing the world as though from a bird's eye view, and creating a *true* representation of it, have been a persistent driving force behind mapmaking. First such attempts known to us had been undertaken by the Babylonians.⁶ Closer to our time the challenge cartographers have put for themselves was to create a *standard* or *uniform* map,

⁵ The three images presented in the thesis come from (clockwise): D. Nolan, 'Liberland: hundreds of thousands apply to live in world's newest 'country'', *The Guardian*, 24 April 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/24/liberland-hundreds-of-thousands-apply-to-live-in-worlds-newest-country>, About Liberland – the official Liberland Webpage <https://liberland.org/en/about/>, Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberland>.

⁶ The urge to create maps was even described as a basic human instinct, a desire determined by biology and the instinct of survival above all else. Brotton, *A history of the world in twelve maps*, 3-5.

one covering the whole of the Earth's surface, reflecting the accurate dimensions of countries and continents, universally accepted and constructed with the use of identical naming conventions, symbols and colours for the entire globe. The *International Map of the World* initiative proposed by Albrecht Penck in 1891 is probably the best example of such cartographic ambition. It was to be composed of 2,500 maps, each of which produced using uniform conventions, and together covering the entire earth.⁷

Research problem and objectives

Maps are but one device for imaging and representing the world. International Relations (IR) theory and the policy discourse are powerful means, which, even though they purport to be merely describing relations between states, contribute to arranging the international. Theories of IR, according to positivists, function as depositories or organizers of knowledge. Scholars who do not share positivist assumptions would usually agree that IR theories have utilitarian purposes. They are to facilitate navigation in international politics, which may either be interpreted as enabling greater understanding or as guiding statespeople in the design and implementation of foreign policy.⁸ Academic IR is not free from ambitions perturbing and motivating mapmakers. The urge to create a *better* theory would not be an entirely unfamiliar sentiment to many scholars. A more thorough representation, at the same time comprehensive and nuanced, one taking a rich variety of aspects of international politics into consideration, representing international relations in their entirety, is viewed by some as the holy grail. The world of policy necessitates such representations to no lesser extent, if for different purposes. The international realm, which is explicable, becomes amenable to change and it may be acted upon. A concrete representation of the world allows for designing and the implementation of goal-oriented policies. In such a world, progress may not only be promised but can be planned and becomes credible.

The two, IR theory and policy discourse, intersect in multiple ways. They rely on one another to varying extent for validation, confirmation and legitimization. Both aim to explain reality and make it amenable to their respective goals: that of exploration on the one hand and

⁷ Brotton, *Great maps*, 213.

⁸ This critique refers to classical theorising in IR. There is a broad debate regarding the place and aims of critical IR theories. Robert Cox should be credited as one of the first who distinguished between 'problem solving' and 'critical' theorising. The most recent input into the broad discussion on the role of theorising in IR was provided by contributors to the special issue of the *European Journal of International Relations*, 'The end of IR theory?'. T. Dunne, L. Hansen and C. Wight "The end of International Relations theory?", *European Journal of International Relations*, 19: 3, 2013.

that of policy action, on the other. Most crucially from the perspective of this research, when they take the international realm as their object, both fields create specific representations of it thereby arranging the international in certain ways. IR theories are always rooted in a specific history and as such present *a* vision of the world, just one among many. Such a vision may, intentionally or not, contribute to the positioning of specific events or political communities above others.

The academic study of international relations has on numerous occasions taken solace in *holistic* representations of the international realm. Such representations are characterized by the belief that the parts of the whole are intimately connected and explicable only by reference to the whole. At times arriving at such a representation has been considered the very aim of theorising. At other times, a holistic representation of the world served as the starting point for studies concerned with a variety of different questions and research objectives.⁹

International society is one such holistic representation of the international and has long been a framework for analysis of high currency in IR as studied.¹⁰ The English School, one of the academic approaches to the study of international politics, usually introduces international society with a classical definition put forward by Hedley Bull. This definition establishes and helps uphold a view of the international composed of states, where the formally anarchical structure is supplemented with societal elements: common interests, norms, rules, and institutions.¹¹ The English School students have made a strong case that we can only make sense of world politics if we take into account its structure as a system of states with an element of society added to it.

A concept of international community, widespread in the policy discourse, shows that the policy world does not remain entirely reliant on academia when it comes to representations of

⁹ The English School can serve as a prominent example of the drive for a holistic representation of the international. Nick Wheeler's analysis of humanitarian intervention and, more recently, Jason Ralph's deliberations on British foreign policy in Iraq, take international society as the starting point guiding their respective research agendas. See J. Ralph, "The liberal state in international society. Interpreting recent British foreign policy", *International Relations*, 28: 1, 2014; N. J. Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2000.

¹⁰ Reflections on international society transcend the nebulous boundaries of the English School approach and can be found in writings on issues such as international norms, special responsibilities, status in international politics or historical sociology. Examples of writing on international society distancing itself from the English School include: A. E. Towns, *Women and states: norms and hierarchies in international society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2010; S. G. Harding, *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*, New York; London: Routledge: 2004.

¹¹ H. Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 3rd ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave: 2002 [1977].

the world. Despite some shared characteristics with the scholarly concept of international society, international community has become a self-standing depiction of the international, which requires no specific backing by IR theory. The growing number and complexity of international problems supposedly requiring policy action prompted policymakers to become more forthcoming and bolder in producing representations of the political world. International community is one such representation and it has held sway particularly since the end of the Cold War. The growing currency of this idea in specific policy areas coincided with increasingly interventionist agenda of Western states. The language of political argument on international issues, especially in the domain of development assistance and statebuilding, has been pervaded with invocations of and appeals to international community.

The ideas of international society and community purport to be objective. Scholarly writing on IR has, on the one hand, presented international society as a *neutral* theoretical framework allowing for a better grasp of international politics and not tainted by any ideology. On the other hand, international society has been reified as really existing, a fact, rather just an interpretation of global international politics. Moreover, international society and community are cast in largely positive light. They invoke positive connotations, for they have been described using appreciative language. Behind the discourses of international society/community looms the promise of order. The society's naturalness is additionally reinforced by the historical narrative of the international society expansion to the point when it became global and universally accepted.

Western scholarship and the policy world do not have a monopoly on creating representations of the international. The gaze which constructed the idea of international society/community tended to be cast from the West and reflects a specific standpoint in IR theorising and in policy practice. Just as mapmaking has been an activity common to different cultures, representations of the world are generated by policymakers and academia in several places, perhaps more so in states with global political aspirations. One such source of worldly representations is Russia. This dissertation turns to Russia to illustrate the relativity and discuss critically the alleged naturalness of representations originating in the English-speaking world. The idea of the Russian World, or *Russkii mir*, which has been gaining sway in recent years in the Russian academic and policy worlds, assumes and reproduces a specific representation of the international. The world is composed of poles, understood as political-civilizational blocs, rather than states, and the Russian World, as one pole, tends to be portrayed as in confrontation rather than cooperation with the West.

Ideational representations, regardless of their sources, may become immensely powerful, i.e. they are capable of arranging the international in certain ways and frame the thinking and policy action with respect to objects beyond their immediate description. When it comes to representations of the international such as international society/community and the Russian World, the important aspect is that they may not only legitimize but also frame thinking and policy practice with respect to the state.¹²

This dissertation's most overarching objective is to engage critically with the process of academic and policy knowledge production, to study ways in which particular representations of the international are produced, reproduced and gain power. Rather than interrogating specific representations of the international solely on the basis of their logical assumptions or conceptual underpinnings, the thesis engages with social processes through which such representations become constructed, reified and acquire agency of their own in the scholarly and policy practice of knowledge production.¹³ Through my analysis I hope to disturb images that have become well ingrained in the thinking about international politics.

The central research question of this thesis asks how holistic representations of the international impact on the conceptualization of and policies towards the state. In particular the thesis explores academic approaches to the idea of international society and the policy practice employment of the cognate concept of international community. These two are juxtaposed with representations of the international produced in Russia with special reference to the idea of the Russian World.

The research design is best outlined in three steps. The first step is to challenge the naturalness of international society and community by juxtaposing them with representations of the international constructed in Russia. Step two is to show how these representations influence the state. Thirdly, I undertake a broader reflection on knowledge production on the international.

¹² This is the reverse of the so called 'domestic analogy'. The usual starting point for IR enquiry is the interaction between states. Large parts of scholarly practice have been dedicated to analysing how states form larger regional groupings or entire international systems. Within that current, the domestic analogy argues that interstate relations can be viewed as mirroring the type of institutional control in place between individuals and groups within the state. How the state is organised can be used to describe the organisation of the international. H. Suganami, *The domestic analogy and world order proposals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989. Yet another strand of research within the broad area analyzing links between the international and the domestic argues that international norms shape domestic structures. See G. Sørensen, *Changes in statehood: the transformation of international relations*, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave: 2001: 48.

¹³ For examples of the interrogation of IR theories on the basis of their logical assumptions, see A. R. Humphreys, "Kenneth Waltz and the limits of explanatory theory in International Relations" (University of Oxford, 2007); A. R. Humphreys, "The heuristic application of explanatory theories in International Relations", *European Journal of International Relations*, 17: 2, 2011.

Argument

The main claim of the thesis is that holistic representations of the international have a bearing on the way a state is viewed and acted upon.¹⁴ How the international is imagined, shapes conceptions of a state and helps devise and legitimise policies undertaken with regard to the state. Whereas the cognate concepts of international society and international community naturalise a specific model of a state, engagement with Russia's view of the international illustrates that a specific model of a state does not need to be an obvious component of the international realm.

The representation of the international in terms of the society of states validates a specific model of a state. The production of a state model is greatly facilitated by the argument that only specific entities are entitled to participate in international relations, those complying with membership criteria. In other words, if we subscribe to the argument that that international society is a real entity and covers the whole world, it becomes natural to say that *every* state needs to conform to international society's requirements.

The idea of international community, pursued by policy practitioners, enables states to be classified into various kinds, from failed and weak to strong and developed. It galvanises a requirement for a state to meet a variety of *international* standards. Presenting a state which is other than democratic and institutions-based as one difficult to accept, it depoliticizes the state. The state becomes an obvious constellation of specific institutions and norms based on the rule of law. This idea legitimizes statebuilding policies and allows for their representation as unquestionably good and those who undertake them as benevolent agents of international community.

Russian political and scholarly discourse produces a distinct representation of the international. The Russian World is an idea in flux, with no definite contours but has implications for the way Russian policymakers view and act with regard to a state. Since the international is regarded as an arena for contending poles, or power centres, and the West as the major competitor, a strong Russia, which in this context signifies an entity transcending state borders, becomes necessary. Only such a Russia is a viable pole in a multipolar order. This image of the international requires a conception of Russia greater than a state. At the

¹⁴ This is not an instance of a *second-image-reversed* approach, which focuses on the effect specific international politics and processes have on states' domestic structures. The emphasis is strongly on constructed representations of the world and on thinking and acting state on part of international actors and IR theorists, rather than changes occurring in states politics and politics as a result of global processes.

same time it allows for the downplaying of the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states. Unlike in the case of Western-led statebuilding, where a specific state model is very well articulated, it is impossible to find a model of a state that Russia would be promoting, forging or enforcing in the post-Soviet space. What surfaces in Russian discourse are categories transcending 'traditional' state borders. The Russian World relies explicitly on spiritual, linguistic and cultural ties, binding the post-Soviet space and demarcating it from the West. Much less emphasis is placed on state institutions embedded in a rule-of-law system of governance.

The above argument has broader implications. By taking issue with the naturalness of international society, exposed strongly by the comparison with the Russian World, the thesis reflects on knowledge production practices. It challenges the possibility of a neutral and holistic representation of the international. IR scholars cannot claim to be grasping international relations in their entirety, IR knowledge will always be underpinned by ideology and produced from a specific viewpoint. There is no *one* position that affords a sufficiently broad or overall perspective on IR. No single vantage point on international politics exists. International society, just like the Russian World, is an inherently political idea, rather than an analytical framework or an entity existing out there. If *the political* is associated with plurality, contestation and conflict, international society as a research framework depoliticizes the interpretation of the international realm as it precludes other possible ways of viewing international relations.¹⁵

There exist parallels between academia and the policy realm in their respective practices of knowledge production. Theory purports to describe and schematize activities of statesmen in order to reach greater degrees of comprehension. Practice, for its part, turns to academia in search of *objective* and *knowledge-based* advice or justification of the policy pursued. But, not only has the policy practice become bolder in the activity of producing knowledge. There are similarities in how ideas advanced in the ivory tower and outside it, in the West and in Russia, are prone to reification, have a universalizing tendency and make use of the civilizational rhetoric. Representations of the international, resulting from knowledge production taking place in the academic and policy realms, perform functions akin to those attributed by the literature to political myths. While creating the illusion of simplicity and

¹⁵ I follow Hannah Arendt's understanding of the political. H. Arendt, *The human condition*, 2nd ed., Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press: 1998 [1958].

control, just as political myths they provide significance, help make sense of experience and act as stimulus for action.¹⁶

The research presented in this thesis claims significance on the grounds that it constitutes a reflection on IR theorizing and hopes to animate the discussion on the objectives and ambitions of IR as a discipline. Adding but a voice in the conversation on the role of theory in ‘reordering global realities’¹⁷, I hope to trigger a re-consideration of academic IR relations with political practice from the perspective of knowledge production and with greater recognition of multiple viewpoints on the international.

Sociology of knowledge and international relations

Ours is a troubled discipline¹⁸

This section outlines an approach to the study of representations of the international realm. Sociology of knowledge perspective helps me account for the process through which world images acquire power to shape the way a state is perceived and acted upon.

Philosophy describes as ‘logical empiricism’ the process of taking as the point of departure the picture of the world as it is constructed by scientific investigation and subjecting it to analysis.¹⁹ My approach does not focus on the structure of thought but attempts to engage with social processes allowing this thought to emerge and gain power. Engaging with certain views of the international constructed by scholars and practitioners, I strive to reveal their main features and point to consequences of framing the world in this particular way. The sociology of knowledge permits the recognition and engagement with the fact that representations of the international are a reflection of the historical, cultural and political environments of their creators and disciples.²⁰ They respond to specific preoccupations and may cater to those who are on the side of specific norms.

¹⁶ C. Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*, New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007.

¹⁷ K. Booth, *International Relations: All That Matters*, London: Hodder & Stoughton: 2014, 46.

¹⁸ K. Booth, “Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future”, in *International relations theory today*, eds. K. Booth and S. Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).

¹⁹ R. Carnap, *Foreword to Modern philosophy of science by Hans Reichenbach*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1959.

²⁰ It is not determined to what extent social and political concerns fall into the remit of the philosophy of social science. The more contemporary descriptions of what philosophy of social science entails are less and less restrictive and allow for sociological aspects to be taken into consideration, see e.g. introduction to G. Delanty and P. Strydom, eds., *Philosophies of social science: The classic and contemporary readings*, (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003).

Despite the breadth of the meta-theoretical debate in IR, few authors would locate their work explicitly within the sociology of knowledge. Diverse perspectives and substantive foci of IR theories make IR meta-theoretical scholars focus primarily on logical presuppositions of arguments they study rather than reflect on sociological determinants leading to these arguments' development.²¹ In general terms, the discipline of IR has not yet fully embraced the possibilities of critique offered by the study of the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it is produced.²²

Rather than attempting to use, follow or apply methodological tools developed by a particular scholar, this research derives its inspiration from programmes pursued by several thinkers. The initial muse has been Karl Mannheim's pioneering contributions to the sociology of knowledge, especially his concern with social sources of political ideologies.²³ I relied on Pierre Bourdieu's more recent insights into the philosophy of social science and engaged with a perspectivist view on political ideas, distinctive in the work of Quentin Skinner. I deliberately use the word inspiration. Mannheim, Bourdieu and Skinner's oeuvre is monumental and, for the purpose of this thesis, I can only draw on general ideas stemming from it rather than engage in detail with their specific arguments. Close following or even direct application of methods developed by a specific philosopher has been relatively common among PhD researchers but adopting tools Bourdieu or Skinner developed for the purpose of their work could turn out restrictive in the same sense as viewing my research area through an IR theoretical framework would be. Having the work of three scholars as my inspiration allows for a re-engagement rather than plain replication of methodological concerns voiced decades earlier and regarding distinct subject matters.

All three inspirations are in many ways connected and crystallize around common themes, even though these authors have been separated by time, language and specific culturally influenced approaches to knowledge. What connects these thinkers is their interest

²¹ For examples of this approach, see e.g.: Humphreys, "The heuristic application of explanatory theories in International Relations"; P. T. Jackson, *The conduct of inquiry in international relations: philosophy of science and its implications for the study of world politics*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge: 2010. In political theory this direction is best exemplified in Q. Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action", *Political Theory*, 2: 3, 1974.

²² An important exception to this rule can be found within the feminist perspective and the postcolonial tradition. See also a pioneering work by I. Hamati-Ataya, "Reflectivity, Reflexivity, Reflexivism: IR's" Reflexive Turn"-and Beyond", *European Journal of International Relations*, 19: 4, 2012.

²³ For Mannheim the task of a sociologist was to unmask ideology by identifying the sources for presuppositions forming that ideology. S. Fuller, *The philosophy of science and technology studies*, New York; London: Routledge: 2006, 18.

in the relationship between political ideas, their potency and the socio-historical context within which they arose.

Since Karl Mannheim was an early-20th century sociologist of knowledge, it is in order to acknowledge later developments in the subject. The *new sociology of knowledge*, according to those who attempt to charter its territories, is primarily interested in types of social organisation making specific orderings of knowledge possible. The emphasis is on institutional structures and their impact. But, the new sociology of knowledge does not remain indifferent to enquires about how ideas become plausible to those who hold them and – in a self-conscious return to Mannheim’s pioneering work – part of the literature discusses standpoints and their influence on knowledge production and authority accorded to particular knowledges. It argues that those excluded from power ‘have a unique vantage point from which to understand aspects of the world that may be invisible to dominant groups’.²⁴

Standpoints are important for this research due to the contrast I am exposing between representations of the world produced from two distinct perspectives: a Russian and a Western one.²⁵ Standpoint epistemology in IR started from feminist criticisms regarding women's absence from, or marginalized position in, social science. Feminism drew attention to the way knowledge in IR was determined by gendered perspectives on the world. Authors like Donna Haraway, aiming to deconstruct truth claims, spoke against disembodied scientific objectivity and called for more nuanced perspectives or ‘situated knowledges’.²⁶ Postcolonialism used a ‘situated perspective’ to foreground rather than expunge the subjective in theorising.²⁷ In more general terms, standpoint research wishes to challenge

²⁴ A. Swidler and J. Ardit, “The new sociology of knowledge”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1994.; A. Wylie, “Why standpoint matters”, in *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*, ed. S.G. Harding (New York; London: Routledge, 2004).

²⁵ I accept that terms *Western* and *Russian* are gross simplifications. My intention is to point to elements I identified as prevailing in scholarly and policy discourses in liberal democratic states (not necessarily limited to the geographical West, as a number of examples stem from Japan and South Korea) and in Russia.

²⁶ D. Haraway, “Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective”, *Feminist Studies*, 14: 3, 1988. In addition, the feminist critique of IR produced significant literature on the subject; works by Enloe and Zalewski are regarded as pioneering and illustrative of this approach. C. H. Enloe, *Bananas, beaches & bases: making feminist sense of international politics*, London: Pandora: 1989; M. Zalewski and C. Enloe, “Questions about identity in international relations”, in *International relations theory today*, ed. K. Booth and S. Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 1995). For a thorough reflection on standpoint epistemology, see S. Harding, “Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is strong objectivity?”, in *Feminist epistemologies*, ed. L. Alcoff and E. Portter (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

²⁷ Robbie Shilliam, for instance, extensively considers intersections between the politics of knowledge and the social world. R. Shilliam, ““Open the Gates Mek We Repatriate”: Caribbean slavery, constructivism, and hermeneutic tensions”, *International Theory*, 6: 02, 2014. Tickner pointed to disciplinary gate-keeping practices as responsible for the lack of systematic exploration of IR from third world perspective. A. Tickner, “Seeing IR Differently: Notes from the Third World”, *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 32: 2, 2003. For a

notions of *objectivity* in science and the neutrality of epistemic agents.²⁸ It studies relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power.²⁹ Both feminism and postcolonialism, develop standpoint epistemology geared towards problematizing subjects and agents of knowledge. They underscore historical contingency of knowledge claims and recognize their social location. Feminism and postcolonialism have their own agendas in resorting to the sociology of knowledge. Their political projects stress the lack of recognition for the perspectives of those speaking from the position of powerlessness.

This thesis engages with the first problem crucial for the new sociology of knowledge – that of how ideas become plausible to those who hold them – by asking about processes through which specific ideational representations of the international gain power to influence the conceptualization and policies with respect to the state. The second thread permeating the new sociology of knowledge writing, and in IR recognised as standpoint epistemology, is relevant to my discussion of viewpoints on the international. Knowledge about the international is particularly problematic in that regard as, on the one hand, *the international* is supposedly a shared space, thus potentially amenable to a common description. On the other hand, perspectives of particular states undoubtedly influence and subjectify the construction of *knowledges* about the international realm pursued in different states.

I part company with standpoint writing in two ways. Firstly, this literature is mainly concerned with different perspectives premised on gender, class or race. My engagement is with perspectives on the international produced by policymakers and scholars of a state, be they Western liberal democracies, like Great Britain – home to the English School, or Russia. I do not claim a viewpoint from Russia is better or more objective. I am rather interested in similarities that may exist in Russian and Western processes of knowledge production. It has been pointed out on numerous occasions that the way Russia approaches the world poses a challenge to a liberal order.³⁰ Rather than focusing exclusively on rival arguments, sociology

broader exploration of postcoloniality as a ‘situated perspective’ see C. Epstein, “The postcolonial perspective: an introduction”, *International Theory*, 6: 2, 2014.

²⁸ Wylie, “Why standpoint matters”, 339.

²⁹ Harding adds how standpoint theory ‘presented itself as philosophy of science and epistemology and a methodology or method of research, appearing to conflate or even confuse fields standardly kept distinct’ S. G. Harding, “Introduction: standpoint theory as a site of political, philosophic, and scientific debate”, in *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*, ed. S. Harding (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

³⁰ M. Mendras, *Russian Politics. The Paradox of a Weak State*, London: Hurst and Company: 2012; V. Morozov, “Western hegemony, global democracy and the Russian challenge”, in *The struggle for the West: a divided and contested legacy*, ed. C.S. Browning and M. Lehti (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2010); R. Sakwa, “A ‘New Cold War’ or twenty years’ crisis? Russia and international politics”, *International Affairs*, 84: 2, 2008.

of knowledge makes it possible to point to similarities in the way images of the international are painted on scholarly and policy canvas. Further research could engage in more depth with the question why knowledge stemming from Russia is marginalised in Western academia and the policy world.

Finally, sociology of knowledge permits answering Bourdieu's call that 'the social sciences must take themselves as their object'³¹ and gives hope for transcending some of the divisions pervading the study of international politics, specifically that between critical and classical approaches. It is suggested that both camps should be more honest about legitimisation strategies accompanying their claims.

Inspirations for a sociology-of-knowledge approach to IR

With all due humility and recognition of the many limitations in my engagement with Mannheim, Skinner and Bourdieu, it is fitting to introduce the inspiration animating my approach to research. Mannheim, whose writing was premised on the idea that there is a sociological component to knowledge, focused on the interpretation of knowledge within a socio-cultural setting.³² He persuasively argued that everyone's beliefs, including those of a social scientist, are the product of the context they were created in. Perspectives change according to differences in time and social location. Social class and even generation were the determinants of knowledge for Mannheim.³³ He was puzzled by the way collective thought patterns were constructed and found expression in political action, or, as he described it: 'how men actually think... how it really functions in public life and in politics as an instrument of collective action'.³⁴ His methodological approach was premised on the assumption that a particular worldview was exhibited and therefore could be read from an *array of texts* produced by a 'generational cohort'.

³¹ P. Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2004, 85-114.

³² This work is by far not the first to be inciting Mannheim into an IR discussion. Great names such as E.H. Carr were not ignorant of his work and made use of his arguments for IR study, but in areas markedly different from those animating this research, see: E. H. Carr and M. Cox, *The twenty years' crisis, 1919-1939: an introduction to the study of international relations*, Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave: 2001, 15, 45.

³³ Mannheim's work, despite the fact that it continued to nourish new scholarship, came under criticism for its thin conception of knowledge and a reductionist image of the relationship between knowledge and social position, see Swidler and Ardit, "The new sociology of knowledge": 306-305. Indeed, Mannheim acknowledged that 'an optimum of truth' can be reached and the key question was which social standpoint offered the best chance for reaching it: K. Mannheim, *Ideology and utopia*, London: Routledge: 1997. These assessments are not consequential from the point of view of this thesis. Given that engagement with sociology of knowledge has often been neglected within IR, it is resolute and justified to look for inspiration at the very source, in works perhaps less nuanced but hinting to the fundamental issues for the relation between knowledge and social processes.

³⁴ Mannheim, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*; K. Mannheim, *Conservatism: a contribution to the sociology of knowledge*, vol. 11, London: Routledge: 1997.

With due respect to the rightful claim that Skinner's methodological programme, for its immense competence and vision, can never be imitated,³⁵ I merely attempt to draw on assumptions that Skinner's scholarship seems to me to be based. In a reflexivist manner, Skinner, in parallel to his studying of political ideas, was contemplating the best method for approaching the history of political thought. His method stands out for the way in which he presented the chief political writings of a period together with the examination of lesser writers, which were to provide the general social and intellectual context necessary to grasp thinking patterns and conditions in which leading theorists worked. His history of political thought is thus a presentation of the development of ideologies rather than an ordered procession of authors or texts, which offers an account of linkages between political theory and practice.³⁶

Skinner's oeuvre contends that the creation and communication of ideas take place from and with particular perspectives. From that it follows that it is important to analyse not only what is written but also *why it was written*. To address the latter, one needs to take into account a specific convention, in other words the *collection of texts* addressing similar issues and sharing specific vocabulary, assumptions and convictions permeating the intellectual milieu within which they were conceived.³⁷ Skinner's aim was to recover specific texts' historical identity and the method assisting the task was a historical and intertextual approach, which the author himself classified as a 'hermeneutic enterprise'.³⁸

The reliance on Skinner's heritage allows me to distinguish my approach from the one taken by the new sociology of knowledge, in particular the post-Kuhnian direction, interested primarily in organizational practices across academic disciplines and the way hierarchy in social organisation impacts intellectual paradigms.³⁹ My intention is not to undertake a thorough study of organizational practices but to focus on the production of ideas in more

³⁵ K. Palonen, *Quentin Skinner: history, politics, rhetoric*, Cambridge: Polity: 2003.

³⁶ *The Foundations* is the best exposition of this approach. Q. Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, 2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1978. See also a methodological essay summarising a number of Skinner's methodological texts: Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action".

³⁷ A connection to Mannheim is permeating this approach. J. Tully, ed., *Meaning and context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Q. Skinner, "A reply to my critics", in *Meaning and context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, ed. J. Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Q. Skinner, "Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas", ed. J. Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

³⁸ Skinner, "A reply to my critics", 232. The present work is not aspiring to be a contribution to intellectual history nor does it follow hermeneutical approach closely but elements of Skinner's method have had a strong influence on the direction this research had taken.

³⁹ Swidler and Arditi, "The new sociology of knowledge".

general sense, from the perspective of sharing and upholding these ideas by generations of scholars.

Bourdieu, in his sociological analysis of science, presented all scientific activity as historical activity. All supposedly trans-historical truths have historical genesis, they are attached to place and time and oriented by specific social mechanisms. Knowledge of society is structured by confines of social worlds contributing to its creation.⁴⁰ Theory, claims Bourdieu, remains valid when it can be used for a specific purpose of a scientist. A paradigm has the power to determine questions that can be asked and distinguish them from those unthinkable. Scholarly ideas may not owe their force to the content of their message but to social factors accompanying their production. In addition, Bourdieu argued that the conventions of science as an academic discipline make scientists downplay the role or even necessity for imaginative acts in devising hypotheses or theories.⁴¹

Whereas all three authors – Mannheim, Bourdieu and Skinner – have drawn our attention to the need for contextualisation, it was primarily Mannheim and Skinner's interest in collective thought patterns and their emphasis on political action, which coincide with this thesis' interest in the construction of and the power of ideas in theoretical and policy practical realms. Skinner, in *The Foundations*, argued that the connection should be made between theory and practice or even priority should be given to politics over thought.⁴² This inspires but also legitimizes my interest in how knowledge is produced and how ideas circulate in academic and practical international relations. Skinner gives the activity of everyday politics qualities of its own, which are inherently connected to theorizing. Mannheim, for his part, accounts for the way a political ideology assumes a place in the ordering of human experience. He points to several important characteristics and functions such ideology should espouse. Firstly, it must be rooted in concrete experience. Secondly, its role should be to assign meaning to the experienced world and to provide practical orientation.⁴³

⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*. In the British tradition of political science and the history of ideas, Quentin Skinner is credited as the pioneer in drawing attention to the significance of historical contextualisation in the study of political ideas.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, 15-18.

⁴² Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*.; Skinner, "A reply to my critics", 233.

⁴³ Mannheim, *Conservatism: a contribution to the sociology of knowledge*.

Producing knowledge and the contentious divide between the theory and practice of IR

The discussion about the status and aim of theory in IR is an important instance of the discipline's self-reflexive engagement with knowledge it produces. It is the closest IR scholarship has come to the engagement with the philosophy and sociology of knowledge.

The notion of theory in IR is problematic to say the least and it has generated heated and at times emotionally charged debates in the IR intellectual community.⁴⁴ There has always been either too much theory, understood as generalisation, or too little theory, understood as a rigorous approach to study. The discipline was once characterised as in the state of 'theoretical confusion'.⁴⁵ An ahistorical view of IR exposes radically different opinions: for Martin Wight, due to the absence of sovereignty and domestic order, enabling political theorising about the state, arriving at an 'international theory' was difficult. It did not exist as clearly delineated body of thought but it was found scattered in various places, including in the practitioners' utterances and essays.⁴⁶ Others see a theory reaching its limits or indeed its very end.⁴⁷ But, as Booth astutely observed, domestic and international political theories have always been 'ideas of their times'.⁴⁸ They have been inspired by events taking place on the international arena, expectations, hopes and disappointments with international politics, decisions and actions undertaken by those held to be IR main protagonists.

Historical contextualisation and an individualistic approach to each and every theoretical proposition, important as they are, may be problematic. The discipline, or rather sociological processes within it, privilege continuity. A degree of continuity is what allows the discipline to exist and legitimize its claims to knowledge. At the same time, the counter-orthodoxies, leading to splits into competing 'paradigms', spur fears of the subject's disintegration and evoke calls to put the specialty back together again.⁴⁹ Despite the state of the discipline

⁴⁴ See for instance Ken Booth and Steve Smith's animated responses to William Wallace's article reviewing several major works in IR theory: W. Wallace, "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations", *Review of International Studies*, 22: 3, 1996.; responses S. Smith, "Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace", *Review of International Studies*, 23: 4, 1997; K. Booth, "Discussion: a reply to Wallace", *Review of International Studies*, 23: 3, 1997.

⁴⁵ F. Halliday, *Rethinking international relations*, Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1994.

⁴⁶ M. Wight, "Why is there no international theory", in *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*, ed. H. Butterfield and M. Wight (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966).

⁴⁷ C. Epstein, "Constructivism or the eternal return of universals in International Relations. Why returning to language is vital to prolonging the owl's flight", *European Journal of International Relations*, 19: 3, 2013.

⁴⁸ Booth, "Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future".

⁴⁹ Booth, "Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future", 329. It is not the aim of this section to provide a substantive overview of theoretical standpoints on international relations. This task has been undertaken by a number of textbooks. For a brief introduction to theoretical constellations and meta-theoretical

recognised aptly as ‘creative chaos’, the hope for it being put together again as the ‘dancing star’ and the subject of all subjects in the social sciences does not fade.⁵⁰

Over the years, controversy has been mounting over the meaning of ‘theory’ in IR, the substantive conditions for a specific proposition or body of propositions to count as theory, characteristics a theory should exhibit, such as coherence or parsimony, and the aim of theorising in general. This is not surprising, given that the ‘problem’ of theory is a socio-political issue permeating many disciplines.⁵¹ Discussions abound on the consequences of labelling specific parts of knowledge as theory. Denoting a piece of scholarship as theory raises its status in the academic world, irrespective of the fact that different meanings and functions are accorded to theory. Authors approaching international politics from the so-called area studies perspective tend to adopt theoretical frameworks, even in the face of apparent incompatibility between their observations and assumptions inscribed within a particular approach. ‘Localised’ knowledge is viewed as inferior to theory-based and generalized theoretical approach.⁵²

There is no one thing which could correspond to the word ‘theory’ and IR scholars are of course not ignorant of this basic assertion but social conditions accompanying scholarship are unforgiving. It matters *what* theory, as the descriptive adjective placed before the word theory may change the approach certain groups of scholars take towards that theory. For some, ‘classical’ IR theory immediately evokes negative connotations due to its alleged defence of the status quo, at the same time as for others ‘critical’ theory is a-scientific.⁵³ Ole Wæver, for

debates of the 1980s and 1990s, see e.g.: O. Wæver, “Resisting the temptation of post foreign policy analysis”, in *European foreign policy: the EC and changing perspectives in Europe*, ed. W. Carlsnaes and S. Smith (London: SAGE, 1994); S. Smith, “The self-images of a discipline: a genealogy of international relations theory”, in *International relations theory today*, ed. K. Booth and S. Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 1995). For a short exposition of main questions distinct theoretical approaches to IR have been engaging with, see: Booth, “Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future”, 338-339. Earlier debates have been recapitulated in H. Bull, “The theory of international politics 1919-1969”, in *The Aberystwyth Papers: international politics, 1919-1969*, ed. B. Porter (London: Oxford University Press for the University College of Wales, 1972). See also K. J. Holsti, *The dividing discipline: hegemony and diversity in international theory*, Boston: Allen & Unwin: 1985.

⁵⁰ Booth, “Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future”.

⁵¹ For an extended discussion about the meaning of theory in contemporary sociology, see G. Abend, “The Meaning of ‘Theory’”, *Sociological Theory*, 26: 2, 2008. The critique Abend develops regarding types of theory is particularly interesting, see pp.187-89.

⁵² Very few authors are explicit and open about problems related to the application of theoretical approaches to developments they encounter ‘on the ground’. Cai Wilkinson is a notable exception. C. Wilkinson, “On not just finding what you (thought you) were looking for. Reflections on fieldwork data and theory”, in *Interpretation and Method*, ed. D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2013).

⁵³ What adds to the complexity of this issue is that scholars have begun to interpret divisions between theories in many ways. Der Derian, for instance, claimed that both ‘camps’, the classical and the critical IR theorists, recognised that: ‘international societies, institutions, and regimes have been historically constructed, out of the desire of order and the fear of anarchy’. The difference lied solely in the approach to anarchy, which was

instance, modelled theoretical debates along the lines of positivism and deconstruction, a spectrum spanning between a ‘border of boredom’ and a ‘border of negativity’, both descriptions pejoratively charged.⁵⁴

All the reflections on the role and characteristics of theory are part and parcel of the broad epistemological discussion regarding what can be known about international relations and how one might endeavour to attain that knowledge.⁵⁵ Explanatory potential was deemed to be the theory’s very essence and the main source of its legitimate existence.⁵⁶ For Kenneth Waltz, theory’s task was to explain laws even if theory itself was distinct from reality.⁵⁷ Hans Morgenthau claimed IR theory should be abstract and apolitical, for only such features were expected to make theory into a tool for conducting world affairs.⁵⁸ Samuel Huntington, with a degree of disregard for those attempting to distinguish between explaining and understanding, suggested that *understanding requires theory* but added that abstraction and simplification are necessary for theory and one cannot expect to *explain* all the facts.⁵⁹ For the English School, an historically informed study of IR was to ‘provide a sense of what makes the world hang together’. The attainment of a holistic vision of world politics – as opposed to the focus

interpreted as either posing a threat to order or order as resulting in anarchy. J. Der Derian, “Introduction”, in *International theory: critical investigations*, ed. J. Der Derian (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 4. This interpretation of differences between theoretical approaches is deeply problematic if we take into consideration that some critical approaches contest the very fact of taking international society as the main object of study in IR.

⁵⁴ Wæver, “Resisting the temptation of post foreign policy analysis”.

⁵⁵ Questions about the *knowability* of social reality perplexed scholars in various disciplines. For early constructivists all knowledge of the world, the commonsensical and the scientific, involves constructs, i.e. ‘a set of abstractions, generalizations, formulations, idealizations specific to the respective level of thought organization’. A. Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1962, 5. But, even though the early constructivists denied the existence of pure facts, they assumed that certain aspects of the world, those relevant from the point of view of ‘a body of accepted rules of procedure of thinking’, could be grasped. Ibid.

⁵⁶ K. N. Waltz, *Theory of international politics*, London: McGraw-Hill: 1979, 6-7. On the importance of explanation in IR scholarship see e.g. Wallace, “Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations”. The expectation for IR theory to *predict* international events has been largely dropped, especially following the unexpected fall of the Soviet Union; compare Booth, “Dare not to know: International relations theory versus the future”, 329. The prescriptive function is hotly debated particularly within norms-oriented scholarship and ethical foreign policy, e.g. K. E. Smith and M. Light, *Ethics and foreign policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2001.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Waltz was one of the first IR scholar, perplexed by the variety of meanings ascribed to theory in academic IR. On Waltz’s understanding of theory, see: J. Rouse, “Feminism and the social construction of scientific knowledge”, in *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*, ed. S.G. Harding (New York; London: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁸ H. J. Morgenthau, *Truth and power: essays of a decade, 1960-70*, London: Pall Mall Press: 1970. Requirements regarding IR theory have been considered by many scholars, see e.g. Bull, “The theory of international politics 1919-1969”, 30.

⁵⁹ Steve Smith made a powerful case for the distinction between theory concerned with explaining, understanding and emancipation. Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”: 513-514.

on unit-levels – has been a clear driving force behind theorizing.⁶⁰ This drive continues. Buzan and Wang recently praised the English School for its ambition to construct a theory ‘at the global level’.⁶¹

The slightly disregarded fact has been that most IR theories, in making an explicit claim to knowledge about the international and in usurping the right to explain the international, produce powerful images of the world.⁶² It is now a truism, but an easily forgotten one, that knowledge of IR is not discovered, neither is international politics simply described or catalogued. Knowledge on issues as diverse as the international is the result of socially conditioned production processes. The idea of international society is particularly interesting in that regard. The way literature developed a detailed yet comprehensive world image based on the English School’s initial, rather narrow, claims about the society of states, is remarkable and will be thoroughly discussed in the Chapter Two.

In addition to specific language and value appeal, i.e. such exposition which establishes and foregrounds a positive image, particular representations of the international gain acceptance and power through scholarly processes of erecting and sustaining systems of knowledge. These constructs require adherents to accept and, to some extent reproduce, contours of the world image created by a particular theory. Criticised as self-affirming research, these practices should be studied in greater depth, which only reinforces the claim that sociology of knowledge perspective has merit in discussing theory and images of the international produced by it.⁶³

Because theories purport to represent the world transparently and in an unambiguous way, they may become commonsensical. This happens when the origins and values

⁶⁰ A. Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press: 2007; T. Dunne, “System, State and Society: How does it all hang together?”, *Millennium – Journal of International Relations*, 34: 1, 2005.

⁶¹ J. Wang and B. Buzan, “The English and Chinese schools of international relations: comparisons and lessons”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7: 1, 2014: 44.

⁶² In the thesis *a powerful idea* and *a powerful image* are used interchangeably and both denote to representations of the international produced by the academia and by the policy world. As I argue in Chapter Six, the aesthetics of worldly representations enhances their knowledge claims.

⁶³ The production of paradigmatic research programmes and its consequences were criticised on numerous occasions under such derogatory terms as sectarianism or scholasticism. Compare D. J. Levine, *Recovering international relations: the promise of sustainable critique*, New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2012., G. van der Ree, “The Politics of Scientific Representation in International Relations”, *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 42: 1, 2013., Wallace, “Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations”. C. Death, “Governmentality at the limits of the international: African politics and Foucauldian theory”, *Review of International Studies*, 39: 3, 2013.

underpinning them become forgotten.⁶⁴ Representations of the world may not only be naturalised but, through social processes accompanying their production and reception, may acquire significant power. Sociology of knowledge allows engaging with the process through which ideas gain power to ‘arouse and direct social consciousness; provide objectives to be sought; and prompt action in their pursuit’.⁶⁵

International practice cannot be said to remain entirely passive in the realm of knowledge production. To the contrary, the world of policy *speaks* more often and in greater detail than previously. Its discourse can be found not solely in the speeches of politicians but in international declarations, white papers, blue papers, strategies, plans and reports. The praxis of international politics, aided by policy-oriented research centres, has become bolder in defining, according names and labels to the reality it acts upon, thereby producing knowledge about the international. It is also enormously consequential, as documents adopted by such bodies as the United Nations are generally held to be expressing commonly agreed and even universal visions.

The earlier instance of the theory-praxis discussion in the domain of IR oscillated around themes of scholarship’s policy relevance and the degree to which scholars should participate in devising policy. Academic IR was, on the one hand, criticised for moving away from government.⁶⁶ On the other, it was expected to maintain a certain distance, allowing it to deliver a position on policy or question the common sense of policy debate.⁶⁷ Assigning completely separate spheres to theory and praxis was questioned on several accounts. A connection between the two was drawn primarily on the basis of the expectation for theory to be generalizing practice. Practice, in turn, was supposed to be using theory for devising or legitimating action. Large parts of theoretical inquiry were practically motivated. Scholars admitted that all IR ‘to a greater or lesser extent does “empirical” work’⁶⁸ and that IR as a discipline grew out of reflections on policy.⁶⁹ Indeed, IR as contemporarily practised in universities often devotes the entire effort to the interpretation of practitioners’ conduct. But, even if a theory-practice linkage rather than a separation was recognised,⁷⁰ the discussion

⁶⁴ Levine, *Recovering international relations: the promise of sustainable critique*; van der Ree, “The Politics of Scientific Representation in International Relations”.

⁶⁵ M. Foley, *Ideas that shape politics*, Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press: 1994, 208.

⁶⁶ Wallace, “Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations”.

⁶⁷ Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”.

⁶⁸ Booth, “Discussion: a reply to Wallace”.

⁶⁹ Wallace, “Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations”: 302.

⁷⁰ Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”.

remained premised on the non-recognition of knowledge-production capacity in the policy world.⁷¹

While the conventional aspects of theory-praxis discussion are of continuing relevance, the supposition that both realms produce knowledge opens up space for engagement with the power of ideas. The process of knowledge production taking place in policy practice should not be disregarded especially within the discipline of IR, where intersections between academic study and policy are so numerous and multidirectional.⁷² Sociology of knowledge facilitates a reflection on the rigid dichotomy and hierarchy privileging academic over policy concerns. It allows the questioning of the notions of scholarly detachment and engagement with praxis and makes possible a re-engagement with Weber's fundamental argument that politics and scientific study are necessarily different vocations. This classical Weberian viewpoint has been reproduced in many different ways, including by IR scholars, who saw policy practice as distinct from theory due to its lack of 'theoretical groundings'.⁷³ With the help of Quentin Skinner's emphasis on 'political life itself' and his push towards the reflection on actual political activities and rhetoric rather than on abstract philosophical principles,⁷⁴ one realises that a policymaker's view of the world is difficult to dismiss as 'untheoretical'.⁷⁵

Engagement with and contribution to the literature

This dissertation partakes in the broad effort to engage critically with the processes of academic and policy knowledge production. As a contribution to how we study and think of international relations, it is not a standard engagement with any of the literatures it traverses. I approached literatures and policy texts as discourses which collectively produce and uphold specific representations of the international. Given the breadth and sophistication of texts I analysed, I looked at them with due humility. I did not intend a thorough exploration of all

⁷¹ Smith did mention that 'practice is unavoidably theoretical' and that theories constitute the world but neither did he elaborate on these remarks nor provided examples of what he meant. Smith, "Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace": 515.

⁷² It has been argued that IR grew out of reflections on policy. Wallace, "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations": 302. Indeed, IR as contemporarily practised in universities often devotes the entire effort to the interpretation of practitioners' conduct.

⁷³ Wallace, "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations". See also Morgenthau's claim that an intellectual and a politician in their professional activities are 'oriented towards different ultimate values' Morgenthau, *Truth and power: essays of a decade, 1960-70*, 14.

⁷⁴ Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*.

⁷⁵ Booth, "Discussion: a reply to Wallace"; Smith, "Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace".

arguments but hoped to cast a summarizing and questioning gaze, contesting holistic representations of the international these discourses advance.

The dissertation engages with the body of IR scholarship discussing international society but, while acknowledging its achievements, develops a sociology-of-knowledge critique of this idea, contrasting it with representations of the international constructed by Russian scholarly and policy discourse. Thereby my work partakes in the discussion about the aim of IR theorising and ways of envisaging the international. In that regard, the thesis makes its contribution by exploring the link between representing the international and conceptualizations and policy action undertaken with regard to a state.

The exponential number of publications engaging critically with IR theorising would suggest there exists a refined critique of international society, one taking on board conceptual issues and social processes surrounding this area of knowledge production. But criticism advanced to date has been partial. A thorough engagement with the problem of reification or agency has been lacking. Disapproving assessment has been either voiced *from within*, i.e. by scholars broadly accepting international society as a framework and attacking its specific expositions or historical accounts or by those rebuffing the English School's Eurocentrism and therefore discrediting international society altogether. The revisionist approach challenged the consensual nature of norms and their universal observance, as postulated by Martin Wight and his followers.⁷⁶

The idea of international society was criticised for reflecting only a particular historical experience, that of Western states. The classical figures of the English School have been castigated for their excessive Eurocentrism and the neglect of coercive aspects in bringing about the allegedly shared norms of international society.⁷⁷ The idea was under attack for helping to legitimize a highly unequal international system, comprising practices of imperialism and colonialism. Mistaken, according to critics, was the presentation of

⁷⁶ M. Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977; M. Wight et al., *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Leicester: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991.

⁷⁷ One recent example of that criticism comes from Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "The Global Transformation: The 19th Century and the Making of Modern International Relations", *International studies quarterly*, 47:1, 2013. A thorough exploration of Eurocentrism in the study of international politics has been presented by Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009). See also a volume edited by Alex J. Bellamy, *International Society and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

international society expansion as a progressive and positive process. Some critics vowed to replace ‘expansion’ with ‘subjugation’ of other regions by European states.⁷⁸

Those who chose to examine international society and its membership requirements from the point of view of the non-Western world, criticised the overreliance on the West European example and the superficiality of order built on the supposedly shared foundations of international society. Since the modern world’s history was divided into two different patterns of international political and legal order, more appropriate would be according to Edward Keene, to acknowledge the ‘dualistic nature of order’. Institutional and legal structures of that order developed differently in Europe and beyond. While European order was tolerant with regard to ethnic, cultural and political difference, the ‘extra-European’ one was preoccupied with the civilizing mission. The key challenge posed by Keene centred on the fact that thinking in terms of international society prevents from taking other forms of international order, such as imperial systems, seriously.⁷⁹

The idea of international society advanced by the English School has been critically addressed from the perspective of states considered to occupy its margins, but it has never been contrasted with a perspective of a state which used to be regarded as a superpower and for whose elites and society its great power status remains an important part of identity. My contribution in this area consists of a thorough engagement, rather than dismissal, and exploration of how the idea of international society is produced, works and gains power. What helps me in this endeavour is a contrast I draw with the Russian perspective on the international realm.⁸⁰

Plentiful attempts have been made to describe and understand Russia from an international society standpoint but the English School literature, and Western IR scholarship more broadly, has not been committed to acknowledging and researching Russian perspectives on the world. As a successor to the Soviet Union, Russia has a history of offering comprehensive and alternative models of socio-political organisation and it has

⁷⁸ F. Halliday, “The Middle East and Conceptions of ‘International Society’”, in *International society and the Middle East: English school theory at the regional level*, ed. B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷⁹ E. Keene, *Beyond the anarchical society: Grotius, colonialism and order in world politics*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press: 2002. See also the work of Antony Anghie who challenged the neutrality of positive international law and explored its functions in safeguarding the West’s primacy in international politics at the expense of non-European actors. A. Anghie, *Imperialism, sovereignty, and the making of international law*, Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press: 2005.

⁸⁰ I. B. Neumann, “Entry into international society reconceptualised: the case of Russia”, *Review of International Studies*, 37: 02, 2011.

engaged particularly actively in developing knowledge of international relations. During the Soviet period, IR as a discipline developed in the USSR in relative isolation from the thinking advanced in the West. A study of Russian debates allows for a closer scrutiny of assumptions behind Western IR scholarship.⁸¹ I attempted, however, not to compare the international society perspective with Russia's construction of the international with the help of the same set of elements. Instead, one provided the lens to look at the other. Russia became part of my method. It provided a mirror to hold up to Western portrayals of the international realm. It is usually easier to come up with criticism regarding 'the other' than to overcome or reflect upon modes of thinking deeply embedded and structured by one's own values and worldviews. To the extent possible, therefore, I attempted to direct Western criticisms regarding Russian or Soviet IR back at theories constructed in the West. I would like to claim this is a contribution to methodological approaches in the study of knowledge on international politics.

Finally, I engaged with the relation between knowledge production in academia and in policy practice with the aim of elucidating parallels in these two domains' efforts to construct representations of the international.⁸² My ambition has been to speak to IR audiences in the hope that my arguments resonate with theorists and practitioners. In casting a critical gaze at practices of representing the international, I do not wish to antagonise IR scholars nor render their work devalued. The most desired contribution, which in this case very much depends on this text's reception, would be to simulate a reflexion and broader discussion about the social foundations of knowledge produced in international politics as well as about sociological processes that make specific ideas powerful, to 'unveil, unmask and bring into light what is hidden'.⁸³

Methodology – the experience of reflexive IR

To reflect on my individual process of knowledge production is as important as arguments developed in this work. In the English-language tradition of IR scholarship,

⁸¹ A. P. Tsygankov, "Self and Other in International Relations Theory: Learning from Russian Civilizational Debates", *International Studies Review*, 10: 4, 2008.

⁸² Smith, "Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace"; Booth, "Discussion: a reply to Wallace"; Wallace, "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations".

⁸³ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, 4.

methodology is usually held to be the collection of methods.⁸⁴ I take a broader view of methodology. Akin to a research design, methodology allows me to delineate the philosophy of knowledge I engage with and discuss epistemological and ontological assumptions of my research.

Methodology I developed throughout this research, rather than adopted from the outset, has three main foci:

a) methodology as a dynamic and reflexive *process*. During the research journey, not only the research question but also methodology evolved as a result of constant reflection on the research process;⁸⁵

b) methodology as a *political choice* denoting the fact that a particular methodology influences rather than only guides the research process;

c) *ethnography* of IR theory and practice. Ethnography is understood as both an approach to research and a set of methods.⁸⁶ Reflexive ethnography postulates conscious self-examination of the researcher's interpretative presuppositions, including the process of interaction through which they acquire information.⁸⁷ Deep immersion in theoretical and practical discourses enabled me to develop a perspective that is both sceptical and empirical, in the sense that it is

⁸⁴ M. H. Kurki and C. Wight, "International relations and social science", in *International relations theories: discipline and diversity*, ed. T. Dunne, M.H. Kurki, and S. Smith (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14.

⁸⁵ A similar approach to the study of politics is known in the literature as 'methodological plurality': E. Schatz, "Ethnographic immersion and the study of politics", in *Political ethnography: what immersion contributes to the study of power*, ed. E. Schatz (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Far from an entirely original perspective, it should be considered a continuation, development or return to the interdisciplinary orientation in the study of politics dating back to 1960s. This genre viewed politics not as a phenomenon *sui generis* but as embedded and related to other aspects of human conduct. D. E. Apter, *Ideology and discontent*, New York, London: Free Press, Collier Macmillan: 1964. These approaches have affinities with the scientific realist suggestion not to take an a priori position on either methodology or epistemology since it would infringe on the ways of understanding of the inherently complex social world. Kurki and Wight, "International relations and social science", 24.

⁸⁶ On the role and status of ethnography in political research see E. Schatz, *Political ethnography: what immersion contributes to the study of power*, Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press: 2009.

⁸⁷ A.C.G.M. Robben, "Reflexive ethnography", in *Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader*, ed. A.C.G.M. Robben and J.A. Sluka (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 443. Ethnography encourages self-reflective accounts, where the author communicates directly with the reader and recounts problems encountered during the research process. It is in stark contrast to the majority of international politics writing where the sharp and well-argued thesis takes precedence over an honest account of the messy research and narrative-building process. In that sense it is possible that IR as a discipline has not yet fully appreciated the general political-epistemological debates about writing and representation. For an example of self-reflective writing in anthropology, see S. E. Zabusky, "Ethnography in/of transnational processes: following gyres in the worlds of big science and european integration", in *Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader*, ed. A.C.G.M. Robben and J.A. Sluka (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2007); J. H. S. Lie, "Challenging Anthropology: Anthropological Reflections on the Ethnographic Turn in International Relations", *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 41: 2, 2013; J. Favret-Saada, "The way things are said", in *Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader*, ed. A.C.G.M. Robben and J.A. Sluka (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2007).

based on deep engagement with arguments and reflection on sociological circumstances of particular epistemic communities engaged in knowledge production. It allowed for the contestation of the classical understanding of ‘fieldwork’ as associated with going out there to the world of policy practice. My ethnographic research has taken place within academia as well as among policy practitioners.

My own methodological stance had undergone transformation along with the project’s advancement and the development of my research consciousness. The initial approach was to apply international society as a framework for research with the ambitious aim of developing Barry Buzan’s claims regarding regional international society.⁸⁸ The original project was aimed at comparing what I had identified as two different models of a state, one promoted by Western international society and one by Russia in Central Asia. This analysis was to be guided by the theoretical framework of international society. By illuminating processes taking place at the intersection between international society and regional hegemony, I wished to contribute to theory development. Adopting international society as a starting point for research was not only limiting in terms of questions I was *allowed* to ask but it also required me to see the world in a particular way. Rather than a facilitation for understanding, the theoretical starting point, one which young researchers are usually told to adopt, prevented me from addressing issues arising from the research process.

This failed application of theory turned out to be crucial for my research process as it prompted an in-depth and scrupulous questioning of research predicaments. The research process and my greater understanding of how methodology and research methods are political activities rather than technical devices, made me refrain from relying on a specific, uniform theoretical framework.⁸⁹ The main thrust came to be a critical engagement with the practice of applying such a framework as a tool in the study of international politics. As a result, this research developed primarily as a reflection on and critique of specific representations of the international produced by academia and the policy world. Since this work is interested in how academics and practitioners engage in world-making and with what effect, arguments presented in the thesis rely on a constructivist ontological position and an interpretivist epistemological one.

⁸⁸ B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez, eds., *International Society and the Middle East: English school theory at the regional level*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2009; B. Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2004.

⁸⁹ Such an approach is not novel in the study of IR. Milja Kurki in her research of Western democracy promotion, proposed to rely on ‘analytical orientations’ instead of a theoretical framework. M. Kurki, *Democratic futures: revisioning democracy promotion*, New York, NY: Routledge: 2013, 11.

The account provided is not the sole or final interpretation of the problem.⁹⁰ Throughout my work on the thesis, I accept rather than suppress or deny complexity. I acknowledge that there are multiple interpretations possible steered by the diversity of perspectives. Ultimately, this dissertation is a narrative and unavoidably a contribution to the political myths it speaks about.

Methods and localities

Parts of the thesis which engage with international practices regarding the state draw on examples from Central Asia, in particular Kyrgyzstan. Central Asia is the physical location where liberal policies of international statebuilding and those undertaken by Russia meet. Central Asia is not a case to draw conclusions from but works as an illustration of arguments regarding policy practice. It was also in Kyrgyzstan that the initial observation animating the research project was made. Back in 2011, my curiosity was inspired by the fact that donors, institutions representing generally Western liberal states, were unable to engage with Russia when it came to policies they attempted to implement in Kyrgyzstan. These two types of actors pursuing activities in Kyrgyzstan seemed to be striving for different goals. They also accorded significantly different meanings to such key terms as security and state.⁹¹ The initial contention was that they pursue different state models. It soon became apparent, however, that Russia was not interested in moulding Kyrgyzstan's institutions according to any specific model. Instead, its activities seemed to be guided by an utterly different conception of international politics. Circumstances related to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine forced me to broaden the geographical focus beyond Central Asia. It was impossible to bypass Russian discourse produced with regard to Ukraine given the more and more coherent representation of the international realm were expressed following the Maidan Revolution.

The choice of methods is usually said to be guided by methodology.⁹² Since methodology encompasses the epistemological rationale for a particular choice of methods, it is only logical that the order from methodology to methods is maintained. But the practice of *doing research* did not conform to this ideal sequence. Methods I adopted influenced the

⁹⁰ In a more detailed discussion of such an approach to the research process, authors point to the fact that in social sciences causal accounts do not attain epistemic certainty and are rooted in researcher's moral and political value preferences. M. Kurki and H. Suganami, "Towards the politics of causal explanation: a reply to the critics of causal inquiries", *International Theory*, 4: 3, 2012: 414-415.

⁹¹ I summarized these observations in a policy paper: K. Czerniecka (Kaczmarek), "The state at its borders: the internal dimensions of Kyrgyzstan's border security", *Central Asia Security Policy Brief*, Vol. 4, 2011.

⁹² P. T. Jackson, "Can Ethnographic Techniques Tell Us Distinctive Things About World Politics?", *International Political Sociology*, 2: 1, 2008; J. P. Rancatore, "It is Strange: A Reply to Vraști", *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 39: 1, 2010.

research trajectory and stimulated a change in the research design. My initial decision bound to the theoretical framework I chose, was to follow methods discussed by the English School.⁹³ I engaged with C.A.W. Manning's suggestion that international society may be amenable to anthropological research.⁹⁴ Interviews I conducted in Kyrgyzstan unsettled this initial presumption. Observations from discussions with research participants escaped all attempts to force them into a theoretical framework.⁹⁵ A change of perspective and a thorough re-organisation of my research question opened new ways to the gathering and analysis of material. It remained a laborious process since the thesis traverses various segments of knowledge production in two languages, both foreign to the author, but it turned into a much more reflexive rather than purely mechanical undertaking. This thesis was informed by a literature review, critical analysis of texts and self-reflexive political ethnography. Throughout the research process, I learned to treat material gathering and analysis not as separate consecutive activities but as intertwined and contributing to sense-making.⁹⁶ The following section discusses my research methods in some detail.

Language and critical analysis of texts

For Bourdieu, language was immensely powerful. His prolific writing on the subject influenced a tradition in social sciences called discourse analysis. Treating talk and text as social action and language as constructive, permitted me to move beyond the text content to focus on internal organisation of discourse in order to find out what the discourse was doing.⁹⁷ Since there are no universally agreed procedures for undertaking discourse analysis, I treated academic and policy text as discourse, which means I engaged with texts not solely on the basis of arguments, but broader socio-political frameworks partly conditioning their

⁹³ C. Navari, *Theorising international society: English school methods*, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2009.

⁹⁴ C. A. W. Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, London: Macmillan: 1962.

⁹⁵ Interestingly, I was not the only one to have experienced this process in Kyrgyzstan. Already at the writing-up stage of this research, I encountered a chapter written by Cai Wilkinson, in which she shared similar frustrations. Wilkinson, "On not just finding what you (thought you) were looking for. Reflections on fieldwork data and theory".

⁹⁶ P. Schwartz-Shea and D. Yanow, *Interpretive Approaches to Research Design*, Kindle ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012: loc 2641.

⁹⁷ P. Bourdieu et al., *Language and symbolic power*, Cambridge: Polity: 1991; B. Johnstone, *Discourse analysis*, Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell: 2001; I. B. Neumann, "Discourse analysis", in *Qualitative methods in international relations: a pluralist guide*, ed. A. Klotz and D. Prakash (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); C. Willig, "Discourse analysis", in *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*, ed. J.A. Smith (Los Angeles, Calif. ; London: SAGE Publications, 2008).

production and partly emerging as texts' products.⁹⁸ My analysis traced recurring elements in texts and aimed at identifying patterns within larger contexts. Analytical material in the thesis is therefore presented as a summary of features accompanied by illustrative extracts.

The argument concerning representations of the international was drawn on the basis of analysing: academic writing, including monographs, journal articles and textbooks, policy documents, speeches and interviews. Skinner's approach to texts in political philosophy inspired my decision to focus on a broad array of texts in order to see how the thinking on international society has been evolving, rather than choosing one or two texts that the English School is best remembered for. Textbooks were taken into account for their aim to delineate what is worth knowing and their formative influence on future scholars and policymakers. Policy documents were selected on the basis of their significance in terms of informing the praxis, i.e. those created by key players in knowledge production and policy implementation, those establishing 'paradigms' or setting directions, such as the UN, the World Bank and regional development banks. The focus has been on discourse produced by national and international organisations as well as individual decision makers and practitioners in the field of statebuilding.

The reconstruction of representation of the international produced in Russia was drawn from official discourse (official policy formulations, speeches by key decision-makers) and contemporary Russian scholarly debate. I utilized the following sources:

a) the official discourse:

- key speeches and articles of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev
- key documents, including foreign policy and national security concepts
- the annual review of Russia's foreign policy, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

b) writings at the intersection of official policy and analysis:

- journals, such as the *International Affairs (Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn)*, *Russia in Global Politics (Rossiya v globalnoi politike)*

⁹⁸ Bourdieu's critique of formal linguistics pointed particularly to the fact that semiotic analysis ignored social and historical conditions of the production and reception of texts. Bourdieu et al., *Language and symbolic power*.

- reports and analyses of think-tanks with close links to the Kremlin, such as Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISI), Foreign Policy and Defence Council (SVOP), Valdai Club
- opinion sections of state-sanctioned outlets, such as *Rossiyskaya gazeta* daily

c) scholarly journals and online publications of academic institutions:

- related to general IR issues and politics, such as *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya i mirovaya ekonomika*, *Sovremennaya Evropa*, *Gosudarstvo i pravo*, *Vlast*.

These sources were mostly read through the means of Russian. All translations of Russian language sources are mine unless provided in the English language on official webpages or by the authors. When an English version was analysed, I used the Russian version to check against the translation of specific terms (e.g. ‘statehood’, ‘international community’). In several cases when a Russian term is of particular importance, a Russian Latinised term was used in brackets next to the English language nearest equivalent.

Following examples set in English-language literature analysing Russian politics, I adhered to the Library of Congress standard for transliteration of Russian.⁹⁹ The only exception I make is to use ‘i’ to denote to both Russian и (i) and й (i), e.g. *Русский мир* is transliterated as *Russkii mir*. In case of well-known politicians, I used the spelling of their names most common in the English language literature. In cases where an author of Russian origin published in English language, I used the publication’s spelling of their name when citing their work and when referring to them in the text.

I refrained from using the definite article in phrases such as international community or international society in order not to imply a reference to a single defined entity. Nor did I use inverted commas since different works the thesis studied accorded varied meanings to the term.

Reflexive ethnography

In order to supplement the engagement with scholarly arguments presented in academic literature, I decided to subject IR theory to methods that IR as a discipline uses in its study of political practice. These include: participant observation, interviewing IR scholars on the

⁹⁹ The Library of Congress rules for transliteration are listed here <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/russian.pdf> (last accessed 30 January 2015).

subject of their academic practices and the perceived influence of their work on policy debates. I interviewed scholars working with the international society perspective, IR scholars working in Russia and Russian scholars employed in Great Britain (altogether seven interviews, whose participants asked to remain anonymous). I have been a member of the English School section of the International Studies Association (ISA), participated in ISA annual convention panels in San Francisco and Toronto and took part in two collective academic endeavours, engaging with international society: a special issue of the *Global Discourse* journal and a collectively-authored book.

Ethnography of IR was supplemented by ethnographic research of policy practice. The English School, despite numerous claims to be representing the way international politics plays out in the minds of states-people, has never engaged in analysing the practitioners' discourses. At the same time scholars who embark on what is called 'fieldwork' in the hope of being closer to the policy centres may find such 'centres' to be dispersed and multifaceted. There is no one uniform policy kernel which produces the discourse guiding policy action. Production and interpretation take place on many different levels. Policies are the effect of complex processes crossing many boundaries, not only national but also educational. My engagement with the world of policy practice was based on in-depth, semi-structured expert interviews conducted in Kyrgyzstan (August-December 2013) and in Russia (October 2013, February 2015).¹⁰⁰ This thesis has also benefited from insights gained during previous research stays in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and 2012. I conducted expert interviews in Kyrgyzstan with representatives of institutions and organisations responsible for planning and implementing activities which may be classified as international statebuilding. In Moscow, the interviews enquiring about political practice were held in: official state institutions (*Rossostrudnichestvo*), governmental research and educational centres (the Diplomatic Academy) and universities (the Russian Academy of Sciences; the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO).

The aim was not solely to use the interviews in order to gain insights and opinions but to engage practitioners in a mutual process of reflection related to our, me as a researcher and my counterpart as a practitioner, understandings and assumptions. This attitude was a result of my reflections on the questions about the responsibility of the academics and the 'audience' of my research.

¹⁰⁰ All interviewees were informed of their rights to anonymity and their right to cease participating in the interview at any point in time. Audio-recordings have been obtained and transcribed from part of the conversations.

Chapter outline

The six chapters of the thesis discuss representations of the international and their bearing on knowledge produced and policy implemented with regard to the state. In **Chapter One** I outlined the research background, specified the research question and objectives. In addition to explaining sociology of knowledge inspirations for my research, I outlined the contours of my reflexivist research philosophy. This required a detailed exposition of methodology, a thorough description of methods and sources.

Chapter Two is concerned with the idea of international society discussed by English-language IR literature, primarily by scholars associated with the English School of IR. Surveying major trends in the English School writing, the chapter traces the route through which the English School research, first driven by the need to justify IR as a discipline in social sciences and later by the urge to explain contemporary issues in international politics, arrived at the point where a particular interpretation of international politics became reified and acquired agency. International society, though it might initially have been just a metaphor for the international realm, has increasingly become associated with the world. These steps consolidated the recognition of international society's universality. An effective statehood, armoured with institutions able to ensure stability and meet the standards of democracy, became the only possible option permitted by this reified view of the international.

Chapter Three looks at policy discourse and its frequent employment of the term international community, particularly within the framework of international statebuilding. It argues that policy practice engages in producing knowledge on the international and may, just like the academia, construct powerful representations of it. Reification, far from being restricted to the realm of IR theory, is preponderant in praxis. The discourse of policy practice presents statebuilding as an activity undertaken in the name of international community. It relies on a particular understanding, description and, ultimately, reification of this community. The representation of the international as international community and the parallel process of endowing international community with agency normalise a particular state model as the only conceivable option and statebuilding as a natural and desirable political practice. The chapter refers to Kyrgyzstan to illustrate how international community reification and agentification perpetuates statebuilding policies aimed at the construction of a state according to specific standards.

Chapter Four challenges the reification and purportedly objective nature of international society by exploring the perspective on international politics prevalent in Russian contemporary scholarly and policy discourse. The chapter claims that several factors underpinning Russia's perception of the international, such as a distinct interpretation of history, the feeling of exclusion and the claim to great power status, have fuelled a confrontational rather than co-operative view of the international realm and contributed to the galvanization of the idea of the Russian World.

Chapter Five explores how Russia's representation of the international is interwoven with views on the state. Unlike in the case of Western-led statebuilding, where a specific state model is well articulated, it is impossible to find a model of a state that Russian discourse would be promoting, forging or enforcing in the post-Soviet area. The idea of the Russian World facilitates the portrayal of Russia as a polity greater than a state and helps legitimise its political disregard for the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states. Constructing the international in terms of a confrontation between the Russian World and the West requires efforts to strengthen a polity transcending Russian borders. Russian scholarly and policy discourse does not engage in any precise elaboration of requirements for the right kind of state in terms of institutions or standards underpinning it. To the contrary, the aim is neither to be explicit about a state nor to build one. The objective in the post-Soviet area is to sustain feeble polities relying on relations with Russia.

The concluding **Chapter Six** situates the discussion in the broader debate on knowledge production. It summarizes reflections on representations of the international realm produced by theory and practice of international politics and points to similarities in the knowledge production process in the West and in Russia. Reflecting on ways in which representations of the international influence concepts and policies regarding the state, the chapter goes a step further and asks what makes certain representations of the world powerful. Sociological processes underlying the knowledge production enterprise make certain ideational representations of the international realm perform functions attributed to political myths. Similarly to political myths, these representations are believed to be true or acted upon as if they were true, they help make sense of experience, provide significance and grant stimulus for action.

Limitations and implications for further study

In recommending the practice of reflexivity, I am also aware of handing over to others instruments which they can turn against me¹⁰¹

The account presented in this thesis suffers from numerous limitations. I decided to criticize the enterprise of knowledge production, in which I unavoidably participate myself. I cast a critical gaze at representations of the international but – by describing them and delineating their characteristics – I, too, contribute to their construction. Whenever one embarks on waging a critique, simplifications regarding the object of criticism are unavoidable. I have been reading the English School work through a particular prism, which resulted in the exposition of only particular aspects of international society scholarship. Critical engagement with the ways the idea of international society has been constructed, represented and used is not aimed at dismissing the effort put into its conceptualization but is a reflection on potential outcomes of looking at the world through this perspective. I treat international society as a representation with no aspirations to validate or dismiss it on the grounds that the real world *is* different. As a representation, however, it has become a powerful idea which only reinforces the need for a reflection on its characteristics and the process of its production. Undoubtedly, writing on international society is broad and diverse. There is no single, undisrupted image of the English School. My take on writing about international society is but one representation, created as a result of my specific reading of that literature. I approached this literature as a body following a particular research vector. I discerned and engaged with the ‘trend of thought’ permeating these works and contributing to the creation of a particular narrative of international society.¹⁰² Pushing the English School writings to their conclusions, I undoubtedly at times compromised nuance. I intended to avoid, but I may not have entirely succeeded, crediting authors with meanings they had not intended to convey. I also attempted not to make value judgements about the moral rightness or wrongness of particular views of the world.

It is important to outline what this work is not engaging with. Firstly, my aim is not to argue that the view of the world as covered by the institutional structure of international

¹⁰¹ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, 115.

¹⁰² I borrow the phrase ‘trend of thought’ from Ossowska, who engaged with the power of ideas by showing how certain doctrines or knowledges may affect morality. M. Ossowska, *Social Determinants of Moral Ideas*, vol. 22, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 1970.

society is *empirically inaccurate*. I do not claim that relations between two or more states cannot be termed ‘societal’. Nor am I asking about Western relations with Russia, the eclipse of the West or the post-Western international order. My aim is to engage thoroughly with representations, to point to the fact that such representations may become powerful. Pertaining to the knowledge production effort, they may frame the thinking and policy action with respect to objects beyond their immediate description.

I do not intend to make a contribution to the sociology of knowledge, accepting that my arguments, localised as they are in one particular field of study, shed light on issues pertaining to this field but shy away from speaking to the diverse debate led by those who take social science as their object.¹⁰³ Not being able to claim mastery over sociological literature, it is impossible for me to offer any substantial contribution to that area which would not be narrowly focused on the domain of international studies.

Despite these limitations, I hope this thesis and its conclusions open several important areas for further study. A decade ago, Ken Booth noted that one of the most exciting *recent* things in IR had been the injection of ideas and perspectives from different regions and continents. Over twenty years prior to that, Hedley Bull had concluded his analysis of approaches to the study of international politics between 1919 and 1969 with a poignant question: ‘If the theories that are available are almost exclusively Western in origin and perspective, can they convey an adequate understanding of a world political system that is predominantly non-Western?’¹⁰⁴ An interesting research question which follows from this thesis could enquire about the status of knowledge on IR produced in non-Western contexts, in particular when it originates from states deemed not liberal. Such an enquiry would be a welcome contribution to the debate about what makes knowledge on IR legitimate, who claims authority to produce knowledge about international politics, and on what grounds.

This chapter opened with a brief discussion of maps, their functions, power and significance in cartographers’ unremitting desire to represent the world accurately. Ambitions tormenting cartography and not at all foreign to the study of IR, exacerbate similarities between the two seemingly different disciplines and expose their immersion in the knowledge production enterprise. Representations of the world produced in the form of maps or IR theories, despite their influence on political realities, remain fragile and subject to criticism.

¹⁰³ This group can by no means be reduced to sociology of knowledge. Different fields, with boundaries difficult to set clearly, take interest in the study of science and knowledge: philosophy and history of science, epistemology, to name these with distinguishable identity.

¹⁰⁴ Bull, “The theory of international politics 1919-1969”, 55.; Booth, “Discussion: a reply to Wallace”: 373.

Albrecht Penck's the *International Map of the World*, an undoubtedly spectacular map-making idea, suffered defeat. Prior to the First World War, its creation was supervised by the British Government, which saw the leadership role as an opportunity to shape the project according to its own interests. The UN overtook the initiative in 1953. Three years later the USSR put forward a proposal for a new world map based on a modified scale. The UN rejected the proposal but the original project never regained its vigour and in late 1980s the UN terminated the *International Map of the World* initiative. The Soviet scheme turned out to be more successful. It culminated with the exhibition of the entire map in Moscow in 1976. The map, used by Soviet authorities as a showcase of the Soviet bloc's ability to produce anything the West aspired to create, reflected on the spirit of international affairs back in the day.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Brotton, *A history of the world in twelve maps*, 439-443.

CHAPTER 2 The idea of international society reified and its implications for the state

The role of theory goes deeper than language. It affects mental frameworks. (...)

If there is no other language in which to think or talk about politics

and if theoretical categories have been internalised,

then theory must determine how the world is perceived¹

Contemporary thought is endangered by the picture of nature drawn by science. This danger lies in the fact that the picture is now regarded as an exhaustive account of nature itself so that science forgets that in its study of nature it is studying its own picture²

Introduction: engaging with the idea of international society

Had this research followed a more traditional path, it would be only fitting for this chapter to open with a literature review articulating a theoretical framework for the study of selected phenomena occurring *in* international society.³ International society, as discussed by the English School, is usually introduced with the classical definition, put forward by Hedley Bull, encompassing common interests, norms, rules, and institutions. Such definition establishes and helps uphold a view of the international which is composed of states and where the formally anarchical structure is not incompatible with societal elements. This definition is usually provided in order to guide the analysis and facilitate the answering of questions about events and processes occurring in the society of states.

¹ The quotation derives from a book devoted to a critical analysis of IR theory as an academic discipline in the Soviet Union, M. Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf: 1988, 329.

² M. Benson, *Cosmographics: picturing space through time*, New York: Abrams: 2014.

³ Examples following such an orthodox path include: Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*. S. Suzuki, *Civilization and empire: China and Japan's encounter with European international society*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge: 2009. Y. A. Stivachtis and M. Webber, "Regional International Society in a Post-Enlargement Europe", *European Integration*, 33: 2, 2011. L. Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian international society: primary institutions and binding forms, 1815-2010*, London: Routledge: 2012, 190.

This chapter advances an alternative perspective. It approaches international society from a knowledge production perspective, studying it as a powerful, holistic (i.e. one in which the parts of the whole are intimately connected and explicable only by reference to the whole) representation of the international. Rather than inaugurating with the question ‘What is international society?’, it asks instead about the grounds for and consequences of posing the question in this specific way. The chapter’s objective is to engage with conceptual ramifications and expose processes taking place in IR scholarship dedicated to the study of international society. It traces the route through which English School research, first driven by the need to justify international relations (IR) as a discipline in social sciences and later by the urge to establish the English School as a distinct theoretical approach and, finally, willing to account for new international developments, arrived at the point where a particular interpretation of world politics became reified and seen as a causative force, i.e. something really existing between states and possessing agency.

The narrative opens with a brief introduction to the context out of which international society arose as a framework for analysis in IR. It points to C.A.W. Manning, who first pondered international society not only as a legitimate concern but as the *key* subject-matter, the organizing idea for IR as an academic pursuit. Despite his strong argument about the *notional* aspect of international politics, this chapter considers Manning as the first to have embarked on the reification process.⁴ I proceed with exploring Hedley Bull’s claim that international society is a neat intellectual construct, which helps understand international politics. While Bull’s *The Anarchical Society* may be regarded as an exercise in the conceptualization of international politics with no pretence to reflect exactly arrangements existing in real politics, his collaborative work, *The Expansion of International Society*, contributed to international society’s reification. Subsequent scholars attached agency and responsibility to what came to be termed ‘solidarist international society’. While international society might have initially been just one way of interpreting the world, it has increasingly become associated with the world. A parallel move was to propose international society as a grand IR theory, i.e. a more rigorous approach to the study of international politics, one allowing for explanation at the global level. Such positioning of the idea was to validate the English School knowledge claims thereby elevating its status in the discipline. Presenting international society as a theoretical framework implies that it is not tainted by ideology. Taken together, these developments in knowledge production led to a merger of an idea with

⁴ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*.

empirical reality. They consolidated the recognition of international society as a global, universally accepted, benign and utilitarian structure.

The representation of the international in terms of solidarist international society led to a greater recognition of a state and its role. Sovereign statehood has always been the criterion for international society membership, but how the state was to be governed *internally* became relevant to the international society conception only later. The reification has been tightly bound to and facilitated the naturalization of a particular model of a state-member of international society, one which fits into the world as it exists out there.

The invention of IR theory and the expansion of international society

It has been thirty years since Hedley Bull and Adam Watson's seminal work *The Expansion of International Society* was first published. This influential volume argued that international society, spreading from the European centre, reached the whole globe.⁵ This work built on Bull's *The Anarchical Society* and Martin Wight's *Systems of States*. What Bull conceived of in *The Anarchical Society* as an intellectual construct helping understand international politics, the authors of *The Expansion* reified. The volume presented international society as a phenomenon existing out there in the world, with global reach and universal acceptance. Around this time a group of scholars interested in the history and 'workings' of international society and postulating rationalism in the study of international relations became known by two names: the British institutionalists and the English School. The latter term, though less precise, gained greater popularity.⁶ The roots of IR's concern with international society, however, go further back in history. It was even before the Second World War that Manning had suggested:

⁵ *The Expansion* continues to be the focal point of IR debates, for instance at the 2014 Globalisation of International Society Research Workshop at the University of Queensland. The second edition of *The Expansion* was published in 2015.

⁶ Several monographs were devoted to the English School: B. Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; T. Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School*, Basingstoke UK, New York: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998; A. Linklater and H. Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. The name has been popularised by an article critical of the English School approach: R. E. Jones, "The English School of International Relations: A Case for Closure" *Review of International Studies* 7: 1, 1981, and other critical writings, e.g. S. Grader, "The English School of International Relations: Evidence and Evaluation", *Review of International Studies*, 14: 1, 1988, as well as by ardent supporters of the English School claims P. Wilson, "The English School of International Relations: A Reply to Sheila Grader", *Review of International Studies*, 15: 1, 1989.

Probably we most of us have our personal mental pictures of an international society in enjoyment of more or less permanent peace⁷

The context out of which international society arose as a framework for analysis was the drive to establish IR as a separate field of scholarly enquiry. C.A.W. Manning can be regarded as the first who pondered the concept within the framework of IR as an academic discipline.⁸ Manning, in the first half of the 20th century, thought of the society of states as the ontology of International Relations. He believed the international society was the idiosyncratic subject-matter, justifying the need to create a separate academic discipline dedicated to its study. Manning was particularly interested in the way states coexisted in the absence of an international system of government. He argued that the condition of possibility for such an arrangement was based on common assumptions shared by states as well as their constant effort to keep such organisation in place.⁹ But, according to Manning, international society was not something existing ‘out there’. It was an element of a prevalent assumption operating in international politics. It was only as a result of state leaders and diplomats acting on this assumption that inter-state relations could take on features that external observers recognised as ‘societal’. For Manning, who is now identified as an early constructivist, international society was a set of ideas to be found in the minds of statesmen.¹⁰ Hidemi Suganami sees Manning as ‘a Rationalist in Martin Wight’s sense, and early constructivist, who saw that the society of states as a social construct was subject to interpretation, reinterpretation, and reshaping’.¹¹

There are, however, several inconsistencies in the way Manning writes about international society. In a pioneering essay on the society of states, he suggested that international society could be studied just like a ‘tribe’ or any other society subject to anthropological analysis. IR, therefore, could become a study of the role ‘of sovereign state in

⁷ C. A. W. Manning, *Peaceful change: an international problem*, London: Macmillan: 1937, 190.

⁸ Deeper roots can be found in the history of international law, for a thorough exposition, see Keene, *Beyond the anarchical society: Grotius, colonialism and order in world politics*.

⁹ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*; A. James, *The bases of international order: essays in honour of C.A.W. Manning*, London: Oxford University Press: 1973, vii.

¹⁰ Proponents of constructivism in IR have been criticised for their unreferenced re-discovery of inputs made a decade earlier by the English School. For examples of this critique, see e.g.: H. Suganami, “C. A. W. Manning and the study of International Relations”, *Review of International Studies*, 27: 01, 2001: 5; A. Hurrell, “Evaluating the English School”, *International Studies Review*, 9: 4, 2007. In addition to Manning, other scholars associated with or claimed by the English School camp, such as E.H. Carr and Herbert Butterfield, referred to international society in a distinctly constructivist manner. For a broader elaboration of this argument, see: T. Dunne, *Inventing international society: a history of the English school*, Basingstoke UK, New York: Macmillan Press Ltd: 1998, 34.

¹¹ Suganami, “C. A. W. Manning and the study of International Relations”.

the life of international family'.¹² Knowledge of the social universe of states could be obtained by means analogous to those used by Bronislaw Malinowski in his anthropological study.¹³ Despite arguing for international society as a notional entity, an assumption held by those who talked and acted in the name of states, Manning also assumed that engagement with international society can be localised.¹⁴ This is most probably related to his personal experience of observing the workings of the League of Nations in one particular location in Geneva. Scholars perpetuated the discrepancy Manning initiated. According to Barry Buzan, Manning perceived international society as existing in practice, as a condition of the real world. The role of research was to reconstruct and describe that practical arrangement.¹⁵

Manning might have fallen into the trap anthropology as a discipline learned to avoid. Namely, the 'naïve empiricism' or 'ethnographic realism', which take the existence of a reality external to the observer and readily lending itself to be discovered as unproblematic.¹⁶ Indeed, in one of the very first reviews of Manning's book *The Nature of International Society*, he is accused of using a 'phenomenological approach', one he himself was critical of.¹⁷ Manning was not the only classical English School author who made references to anthropology. Bull, in his defence of international society, compared the study of the international realm to anthropological accounts of African political systems.¹⁸ To his credit, he also maintained that international society is just one representation.

The direct implication of Manning's thinking was that there may be just one (idea of) international society. Manning did not acknowledge that there may be different views on the international or diverging opinions as to how it should work. His *empirical* observation proved that statesmen shared one idea and acted upon it. What follows from Manning's thought is that statesmen have similar if not identical ideas concerning inter-state relations.

¹² Manning's writing is renowned for its overuse of metaphors and rather unclear writing style, T. E. Aalberts, "Playing the game of sovereign states: Charles Manning's constructivism avant-la-lettre", *European Journal of International Relations*, 16: 2, 2010.

¹³ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 204-205.

¹⁴ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 43.

¹⁵ Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 13.

¹⁶ K.H. Kohl, "Introduction", in *The end of anthropology?*, ed. H. Jebens and K.H. Kohl (Wantage: Sean Kingston, 2011), 5; Robben, "Reflexive ethnography", 446.

¹⁷ C. A. McClelland, "The Nature of International Society", *American Political Science Review*, 56: 4, 1962: 984.

¹⁸ H. Bull, "Society and anarchy in international relations", in *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*, ed. H. Butterfield and M. Wight (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 44. The argument that international society can be observed empirically has been recently reinvigorated. Navari, *Theorising international society: English school methods*; P. Wilson, "The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions", *International Studies Review*, 14: 4, 2012.

International society was an official assumption in the light of which the game of states was being played. It was also a utilitarian structure and as such acquired positive connotations. It was presented as allowing for the preservation of the precarious orderliness of interstate relations in the world under anarchy.

‘What is international society?’

The foundations laid by Manning animated subsequent English School debates. Among the problems that concerned early disciples of the English School were the components of international society and when international society could be said to have come into existence.¹⁹ These are closely linked to the oft quoted focus of inquiry by Martin Wight:

The first question to be considered was, «What is international society?» There is another ... «How far does international society, supposing there be one, extend?»²⁰

The problem with such framing of the debate is that it was almost mechanically conducive to reification. The question was no longer framed in constructivist terms, it was no longer about assumptions. Instead of asking when such assumptions coalesced or when they became dominant, the English School started asking when a society began and where, geographically, it ends. The way these two questions were posed implied the acceptance of international society as a tangible phenomenon. Wight himself, in one version of the answer, suggested that international society was a ‘political and social fact, attested to by the diplomatic system, diplomatic society, the acceptance of international law and writings of international lawyers’.²¹ Wight was another scholar torn between the anthropological study of international society and the treatment of it as an idea. He developed an argument that the international system is inherently ambiguous and we need metaphors that capture that ambiguity.²² But geography and spatial representation of international society was present in Wight’s writing. After the Hague conference in 1907, he claimed, Western international society covered a greater part of the world and after 1945 he saw world politics as divided into two international societies, the West European and the communist one: ‘their

¹⁹ M. Wight, *Systems of states*, Leicester: Leicester University Press: 1977, 110.

²⁰ M. Wight, G. Wight, and B. Porter, *International theory: the three traditions*, Leicester: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs: 1991, 49.

²¹ Wight, Wight, and Porter, *International theory: the three traditions*, 30.

²² M. Wight, “The Balance of Power”, in *Diplomatic investigations : essays in the theory of international politics*, ed. H. Butterfield and M. Wight (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 149-151.

overlapping, as for example in the United Nations, being less important than their mutual exclusiveness, as in the non-recognition of Red China'.²³

In the preface to the first volume produced by the English School, *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield claim: 'The frame of reference [for the present collection of essays] has been diplomatic community itself, international society (...) nature and distinguishing marks of the diplomatic community, the way it functions, the obligations of its members'. The approach the authors took in the volume was 'empirical and inductive' and the stated aim of the publication was to 'clarify the principles of prudence and moral obligation which have held together the international society of states throughout its history, and still hold it together'.²⁴ What is implicit in such a description is that international society may be considered in terms of membership, boundaries and criteria for admission.²⁵ As a result the focus turned to geography and spatiality, and the distance between assumptions and reality narrowed.

Hedley Bull gave the most comprehensive answer to Wight's question: what is international society. Bull outlined the concept in his seminal work *The Anarchical Society* (1977). The book quickly emerged as a canonical work in the field of IR, welcomed as a commendable attempt at theorising IR beyond the realist-idealist opposition.²⁶ Bull was the figure who started broadening the classical minimalist conception of international society, unsuitable, in his view, to account for new developments in international politics. The classical minimalist conception of international society, ascribed to Manning and James,

²³ Wight, Wight, and Porter, *International theory: the three traditions*, 50.

²⁴ H. Butterfield and M. Wight, "Preface. Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics", in *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*, ed. H. Butterfield and M. Wight (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 12.

²⁵ Martin Wight's scholarship was far from uniform in its treatment of international society. On the one hand reification was evident, e.g. when he referred to post-independence 19th century North and South Americas as international society's 'peripheral members' Wight, *Systems of states*, 117. On the other, Bull in the introductory essay to *International theory: the three traditions* emphasised that Wight distanced himself from behaviourists in that he sought to engage with moral questions and rather than arrive at certainty, what he aimed for was 'an account of the debate among contending theories and doctrines, of which no resolution could be expected' H. Bull, "Martin Wight and the theory of international relations", in *International theory: the three traditions*, ed. M. Wight, G. Wight, and B. Porter (Leicester: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991). Bull, admitting his unrelenting admiration for Wight's scholarship, pointed towards several deficiencies. Wight's work, which 'saw modern international society as the product of Western culture', was vulnerable to the charge of Eurocentrism. Bull, "Martin Wight and the theory of international relations", xxii-xxiii.

²⁶ That states, through their interactions, reflexively formed a society was a major topic undertaken also by Manning *The Nature of International Society* and A. Watson *The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis*, Abingdon: Routledge: 1992, but the clear distinction between international system (where states interact, but do not share norms) and international society was 'The Anarchical Society's' contribution.

encompassed sovereign states, international law and diplomacy.²⁷ The very existence of international law was deemed sufficient to conceive of relations between states as forming a society.²⁸ In Bull's words, international society was more complex. It was said to exist 'when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions'.²⁹

Bull, in his early work, constructed international society as an analytical framework and just one of several possible interpretations of the international.³⁰ Following Martin Wight's distinction of three traditions of thought (realist, universalist/revolutionary and rational/internationalist), Bull equated the latter with viewing 'international politics as taking place within an international society'.³¹ For Bull, however, and especially if one takes into consideration his work in general rather than his early publications, the relationship between international society and *reality* or international politics as it existed *out there*, was more complex. In a probably impossible attempt to bridge the description of international political reality with delineating its desired moral course, Bull regarded international society as a way 'through which such order as exists in world politics is now maintained'.³² For Bull 'the element of society has always been present [...] in the modern international system'.³³ This is where order, rather than an ethical presupposition, takes the form of a positivist description, it is an answer to a 'what is' type of a question. Order acquired an ethical dimension when Bull suggested it was 'an arrangement of social life such that it promotes certain goals or values'.³⁴

In *The Expansion of International Society* the tense relationship between ethics and the description of the world becomes muted. Not only did Bull move away from the 'what is' question, he started explaining how the society of states came into being and expanded into a global one. This is probably why *The Expansion* should be regarded as a crucial step in the process of international society reification. What Bull initially outlined in 1977 as a

²⁷ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*; A. James, "International society".

²⁸ James, *The bases of international order: essays in honour of C.A.W. Manning*.

²⁹ Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 13. This definition, though widely used, has also been criticized predominantly for the lack of precision, especially if it were to form the basis of a theoretical approach to the study of international relations. For an elaboration of this argument and the presentation of its proponents see: A. Linklater and H. Suganami, *The English school of international relations: a contemporary reassessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2006, 81.

³⁰ Bull, "Society and anarchy in international relations".

³¹ Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 23.

³² Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, xxxii.

³³ Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 38-49.

³⁴ Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 4.

framework, a way of looking at and evaluating the world, became equated with empirical reality when Bull and Watson asked:

Has the geographical expansion of international society led to a contraction of the consensus about common interests, rules, and institutions, on which international society properly so called, as distinct from a mere international system, must rest? Or can we say that the framework of the old European society of states has been modified, adapted, and developed in such a way that a genuinely universal and non-hegemonial structure of rules and institutions has taken root?³⁵

The work describes the creation of European international society and *its encounters* with the outside world, including Russia, India and Africa. It proceeds with the account of the broadening of membership, as a result of non-European states joining international society, among which are the Ottoman empire, China and Japan. Finally, authors present the evolution of European-turned-global international society into a global one, with key contributions by Bull on the Third World's revolt against the West and Vincent on racial equality.³⁶

The character of the interaction between European society and non-European societies remained disputed. Two models were proposed. According to the first, international society emerged in Europe and came to dominate on the global scale, superseding other regional societies mainly because of its military supremacy.³⁷ This narrative has been strengthened by works of Gong and Watson.³⁸ The competing approach stressed the relative underdevelopment of European international society at the beginning of its global expansion and the resulting evolution of European international society under the influence of encounters with non-European societies.³⁹ Little argued for a more nuanced reading of the *Expansion*, stressing that particular contributions acknowledged the role of interactions between Europe and other parts of the world.⁴⁰

³⁵ H. Bull and A. Watson, eds., *The Expansion of international society*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 8.

³⁶ H. Bull, "The Revolt Against the West", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).; R. J. Vincent, "Racial Equality", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

³⁷ Bull, "The emergence of a universal international society"; A. Watson, "European International Society and its Expansion", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

³⁸ G. Gong, *The standard of "civilization" in international society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1984; Watson, *The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis*.

³⁹ B. Buzan and R. Little, "The Historical Expansion of International Society", unpublished paper (2008).

⁴⁰ R. Little, "Reassessing the Expansion of the International Society", *E-International Relations*, (last accessed 2 May 2013), <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/05/02/reassessing-the-expansion-of-the-international-society/>.

The expansion of international society was supposed to have come to a close in the second half of the twentieth century, culminating in a global structure of nearly two hundred states. The expansion was understood in terms of the spread of rules and institutions, especially that of international law, seen as the crucial element of the social interactions between sovereign states.⁴¹ Thus institutions of international society were considered functional, pragmatic and necessary for the coexistence of political communities. It was, according to Manning, ‘pragmatic inevitability’ for states to accept positive international law originating in the West. The English School saw this expansion as a historical process. Not only was it a success story but also a rational way of conducting international relations.⁴²

The Expansion discussed whether international society can embrace multicultural membership. It referred to one of the key questions posed by Wight about cultural homogeneity: how far is this a necessary condition for the effective functioning of states-system and, by implication, what are the prospects for the institutions of contemporary international society, which have their origins in European civilization and now encompass the world and a variety of cultures. The answer provided by Bull and Watson suggested that new ‘entrants’ to international society sought to reshape existing rules in order to reduce discrimination but, overall, they did accept the existing institutional framework, finding it helpful also in arranging relations between them. They were deemed to have accepted the culture of modernity upon which international legal, diplomatic and administrative institutions rested.⁴³

Bull confirmed the ontological status of international society several years later:

...states, although not subject to a common superior, nevertheless formed a society – a society that was *no fiction*, and whose workings could be observed in institutions such as diplomacy, international law, the balance of power and the concert of great powers.⁴⁴

The society was no fiction because states acted on the assumption that such a society existed. The idea could not be judged as either true or false but it was nevertheless action-guiding and meaning-conferring. But society of states as just an assumption acquires

⁴¹ Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 123, 136; Bull and Watson, eds., *The Expansion of international society*.

⁴² H. Suganami, “The English school, history, and theory”, *Ritsumeikan International Affairs*: 9, 2011.

⁴³ Bull and Watson, eds., *The Expansion of international society*, 430-435.

⁴⁴ Bull, “Martin Wight and the theory of international relations”, xii.

materiality if one starts, as Bull did, discussing its expansion and embarks on mapping this expansion onto the world in a historicised manner.

The history of IR as a discipline has a bearing on the evolution of this debate. It is thus important to situate this process of reification in a broader context. Work on international society was conducted at an important juncture for IR as an academic pursuit, when IR scholars felt the need to assert their work as a legitimate field of enquiry.⁴⁵ Once this had been achieved, there emerged a need to distinguish the British from the American perspective on the study of IR. Long before Stanley Hoffmann noted that IR was an American social science,⁴⁶ the English School was keen to distinguish itself from American IR: ‘The British have probably been more concerned with the historical than the contemporary, with the normative than the scientific, with the philosophical than the methodological, with the principles than policy’.⁴⁷ The common narrative of international society facilitated the desired distinction from work stemming from the US and granted recognition in the academic community.

Solidarism and ‘agential’ international society

It may be argued that the English School developed in the international political context not exactly suited to its own claims. Most writing was produced under conditions of the Cold War rivalry between two superpowers. But it was only the post-Cold War liberal optimism and the supposed triumph of democracy that re-invigorated the international society debate. The fall of communism convinced politicians (in particular the Bush and Clinton administrations and Tony Blair’s government) and scholars (Francis Fukuyama and his influential *The end of history*) of the victory of the Western model of politics and economy. It was expected that liberal values would acquire wide-spread acceptance and that intervention aimed at peace-building and human rights protection would not only bring results but would raise no objections.⁴⁸ This was a fertile ground for the English School analysis, which in that period engaged in endowing the already reified international society with agency.

⁴⁵ Martin Wight’s essay ‘Why is there no international theory?’ discussed in detail reasons for the ascendancy of political theory over international theory. He was deeply concerned by this phenomenon and argued for a change of attitude on the grounds that international politics differed from domestic politics and were less susceptible to ‘progressivist’ interpretation. Wight, “Why is there no international theory”, 26.

⁴⁶ S. Hoffmann, “An American social science: international relations”, *Daedalus*, 106: 3, 1977.

⁴⁷ Butterfield and Wight, “Preface. Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics”, 12.

⁴⁸ B. Jahn, *Liberal internationalism: theory, history, practice*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2013, 3-4; T. Dunne and M. McDonald, “The politics of liberal internationalism”, *International Politics*, 50: 1, 2013.

At this point it is important to introduce the distinction between pluralist and solidarist views on international society, originally proposed by Hedley Bull.⁴⁹ Bull defined solidarist international society as one that exhibits enough solidarity to enable ‘collective enforcement of international rules and the guardianship of human rights’.⁵⁰ Pluralism, in contrast, was to denote diversity as the fundamental feature of international society. In Bull’s writing, pluralism and solidarism were conceptualized as alternatives. The pluralist view of international society was based on the concept of coexistence and appreciation of difference. Solidarism was centred on the possibilities for progress, the existence of a superior human value that should be promoted and protected. The proposition that states have duties to humanity is the natural development stemming from this strand of thinking.⁵¹ However, for Bull and his followers, even the pluralist view of international society implies a goal-oriented structure, aimed at securing order. Hurrell, for instance, explains pluralist or thin society as one in which there are three fundamental goals: ‘the preservation of the society of states itself, the maintenance of the independence of individual states, and the regulation – but not elimination – of war and violence amongst states and societies’.⁵² Pluralism appears to acknowledge diversity, but *within* international society.

Both the minimalist definition of international society, presenting it as composed of sovereign states, international law and diplomacy, and the more elaborate and complex one proposed by Bull, turned out to be insufficient to account for processes such as the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide. In order to make sense of these developments, Tony Knudsen argued that the society of states was moving towards a *solidarist dimension*, and came up with *indicators* conforming this thesis: the concept of human security, the idea of responsibility to protect, the renewed notion of just war, as well as the creation of legal

⁴⁹ Bull, “The Grotian conception of international society”.

⁵⁰ Bull’s approach strengthened the impression that pluralism and solidarism are mutually exclusive and international society may represent one type only at any given time. Bull’s own position with regard to international society as pluralist or solidarist has not been constant. Bull’s pluralism has been much more prominent in his earlier work. It was in his later interventions that he leaned towards solidarism. His ambiguous position led Wheeler and Dunne to advocate for ‘Bull’s pluralism of the intellect and solidarism of the will’. N. J. Wheeler and T. Dunne, “Hedley Bull’s pluralism of the intellect and solidarism of the will”, *International Affairs*, 72: 1, 1996. See also Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 58. for a discussion on the foundations of Bull’s notion of solidarism.

⁵¹ The pluralist versus solidarist debate has for long been described in terms of ‘the best-known tension within English School theory’. J. Williams, “Pluralism, solidarism and the emergence of world society in English School theory”, *International Relations*, 19: 1, 2005: 20. The understandings of solidarism and pluralism, however, are not constant; they change and evolve away from this dichotomy towards a more complex form of interplay and merging between the two. The more recent writing on international society pointed to links between solidarism and pluralism. M. S. Weinert, “Reframing the Pluralist—Solidarist Debate”, *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 40: 1, 2011.

⁵² Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 3.

bodies and institutions empowered to prosecute and protect individuals, e.g. the International Criminal Court or the European Court for Human Rights.⁵³ It was claimed that the newly achieved Western domination was coupled with greater normative ambitions as well as with the attempts to impose the solidarist agenda on other states.⁵⁴ Nicholas Wheeler termed the period the ‘solidarist moment’.⁵⁵ For Wheeler the practice of humanitarian intervention represented a ‘new solidarism in the society of states’.⁵⁶ The aim for international politics was now explained as reaching beyond the classical international society goal of the preservation of order.⁵⁷ As a consequence, what was initially reified, i.e. treated as a thing existing in space and time, now acquired agency. International society was now to ‘save strangers’ and *empower* states.⁵⁸

Endowing international society with agency became common in many English School writings but it remains deeply problematic and rarely has been subject to a thorough exposition. Incoherence persists with regard to the agent behind that *motion, desire* and *ability* on part of the society of states. Even though international society is on numerous occasions called to action or assigned responsibility, the English School remained undecided on how to approach the agency conundrum.⁵⁹ Ascribing agency to states has been a common practice; Bull saw states as ‘providers of world order’ and as the carriers of ‘political functions of international society’.⁶⁰ Other prominent English School authors conferred agency in governments, statespersons or diplomats acting in the name of states.⁶¹

Chris Brown’s work is pioneering in its attempt to describe agency with regard to international society as a whole. Brown linked agency with purpose and suggested that the

⁵³ T. B. Knudsen, *International Society and International Solidarity: Recapturing the Solidarist Origins of the English School*, paper presented at the ECPR workshop, 14-19 April 2000, Copenhagen.

⁵⁴ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 58; Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 47-49; A. Hurrell, “Legitimacy and the use of force: can the circle be squared?”, *Review of International Studies*, 31: S1, 2005: 21.

⁵⁵ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 285.

⁵⁷ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 59-60.

⁵⁸ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*; Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*; R. H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1990, 21.

⁵⁹ The discipline of IR has seen several attempts to account for the agency of a collective. One of the most coherent models was proposed by Toni Erskine with regard to the UN, T. Erskine, *Can institutions have responsibilities? Collective moral agency and international relations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2003; T. Erskine, ““Blood on the UN’s Hands”? Assigning Duties and Apportioning Blame to an Intergovernmental Organisation”, *Global Society*, 18: 1, 2004.

⁶⁰ H. Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, London: Macmillan: 1977, 74.

⁶¹ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*; Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*; R. H. Jackson, *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press: 2000.

society of states, being a practical as opposed to purposive association, could have no objectives other than to facilitate coexistence of its members.⁶² This would suggest it was impossible to endow international society with agency but Brown noted an important change occurring with regard to the goals structure. The development of the human rights regime and the ascendance of solidarism, he noted, informs and modifies the goals framework of international society.⁶³

Other scholars went further as they attached agency and responsibility to what came to be termed solidarist or liberal international society.⁶⁴ Solidarist society acting in defence of human rights could, under certain conditions, undertake legitimate humanitarian intervention. The research question guiding Wheeler's analysis asked: 'how far the society of states has developed a new collective capacity for enforcing minimum standards of humanity'.⁶⁵ The query is premised on the assumption that international society has a collective capacity to act, to establish and follow a moral judgement regarding the standards of humanity.

An answer to any question of political theory involves value judgements. These are rarely answers describing *what is* but far more often answers in terms of *what ought to be*.⁶⁶ As a consequence answers to these questions are never objective and inevitably tainted by political ideology, understood as a fairly coherent value system. Answering the questions that international society scholars have been concerned with is impossible without some sort of reification. Although reification is a perennial, and most possibly unavoidable problem in all social sciences, it has profound consequences for the study of IR.

⁶² There is no broad agreement on that issue and it appears to be changing over time. Hidemi Suganami would support Brown's claim, seeing international society as pragmatic and utilitarian. H. Suganami, "The international society perspective on world politics reconsidered", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2: 1, 2002. This is probably the effect of earlier writing of Alan James, who argued that society of states, being formal in character, does not have to achieve substantive goals or standards. It rests on international law understood as the 'body of legal rights and duties which the members of international society themselves regard as applicable to their relations with each other' A. James, "Law and order in international society", in *The bases of international order: essays in honour of C.A.W. Manning*, ed. A. James (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 60-61. Morris, in turn, saw international society as a purposive entity. J. Morris, "Normative innovation and the great powers", in *International society and its critics*, ed. A.J. Bellamy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 280.

⁶³ C. Brown, "Moral agency and international society. Reflections on norms, the UN, the Gulf War, and the Kosovo campaign", in *Can institutions have responsibilities?: collective moral agency and international relations*, ed. T. Erskine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 58. Much of English School writing in the 2000s assumed there existed normative ambitions and goals which international society as a whole should be pursuing. Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 58; Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 47-49; Hurrell, "Legitimacy and the use of force: can the circle be squared?": 21.

⁶⁴ Hurrell, "Legitimacy and the use of force: can the circle be squared?"; Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 12.

⁶⁶ H. Suganami, "Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics", *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 37:2, 2008.

For instance, in case of Wheeler's *Saving Strangers*, the way the question was asked presupposed the answers. There were strangers to be saved in the first place and there was international society with an obligation to come to their rescue. The 'solidarist theory of humanitarian intervention', which Wheeler devised as a framework for deciding what should count as a legitimate humanitarian intervention, required idiosyncratic presuppositions: the liberal notion of individual freedom and the Enlightenment vision of the need and possibility of undertaking collective action. This society, we read, has the 'prevailing morality' and the capacity for setting boundaries of acceptable conduct.⁶⁷ What is implicit in this analysis is that international society as an agent becomes equated with the West. Notwithstanding the selection of cases, among which there are interventions led by non-Western states (all of which took place during the Cold War), Wheeler's argument is always about how such interventions should be endorsed by international society, i.e. the West: 'the society of states should have welcomed India's, Vietnam's, and Tanzania's acts of rescue'.⁶⁸ Wheeler not only recognised the 'voice of solidarism' in diplomatic exchanges and 'solidarity exhibited by the society of states' but openly advocated a 'solidarist project', claiming that there is a possibility to reconcile order and justice especially with regard to the enforcement of human rights.⁶⁹ The deeply contentious aspect of this analysis is that international society is, on the one hand, the analytical framework and, on the other, becomes the agent.

What distinguishes *Saving Strangers* is the extensive conversation with realism presented in parallel to the development of the book's argument. Wheeler's implicit objective has been the refutation of realist claims in IR theory. The book discusses two building blocks of realism – the primacy of power politics and the state-centric nature of politics. While realism regards humanitarian intervention as contingent upon powerful states' parochial interests, the solidarism advocated by Wheeler underlines a moral obligation to intervene regardless of these interests and in accordance with cosmopolitan ethics transcending loyalty located in the state.⁷⁰ What becomes evident is that not only the question Wheeler explicitly identified as guiding his research but also the agenda of countering realism determined to a significant extent the argument pursued in his study. It serves as yet another illustration of how the development of a discipline interacts with its knowledge claims.

⁶⁷ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 10-12.

⁶⁸ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 139.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 285.

⁷⁰ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, 27-30, 290.

Hurrell noticed that solidarist international society depended on and reinforced the power of dominant states. He equated a states-based political order with international society and aimed to analyse the ‘character’ of that society.⁷¹ He also recognized the indispensable role of solidarism in meeting the challenges faced by international society. Despite the fact that international society is not seen by Hurrell as a natural feature but as a social construct based on shared ideas, embedded in historical practices, he does conceive international society as a ‘polity’,⁷² analysing its changing structure, membership and the introduction of insider-outsider categories.⁷³

Wheeler and Hurrell’s arguments share two important underlying presumptions: not only is it possible to think of international politics in terms of solidarist international society, but that society has moral purposes, which it should strive to fulfil.⁷⁴ These presumptions make the reification of international society difficult if not impossible to avoid. If the starting point of a research agenda is the assumption that ‘something has to be done’, there inevitably arises a need for an agent. The merger of the analytical starting point with an agency-bearing entity is deeply problematic and remains unresolved in both authors’ writing.

Ian Clark implicitly ascribed agency to international society, pointing out that international society pursues different types of purposes, from coexistence to cooperation, depending on the extent of shared values among states.⁷⁵ In his most recent intervention, Clark asked: ‘When international society acts, who is it that acts in its name?’. The answer he provided in the ensuing discussion was not conclusive. Importantly, however, Clark explicitly embraced international society as a ‘powerful agent’.⁷⁶

The reification problem has several implications. Firstly, it gives shape to a particular view of the world; it grounds certain assumptions about the nature of international politics. Secondly, international society became reified as a ‘holistic concept’, meaning one that pretends to represent the whole of international politics. Such a representation was aided by the illusion of equality between states. There has been insufficient acknowledgement on the part of the English School that what is meant when agential international society is invoked is usually simply the West. More recent scholarship drew attention to the exclusivity of agency.

⁷¹ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 4-6.

⁷² Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 17-20.

⁷³ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 41, 287.

⁷⁴ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*; Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*.

⁷⁵ I. Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press: 2005, 23.

⁷⁶ I. Clark, *The vulnerable in international society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2013, 14.

Reus-Smit and Buzan saw liberal-constitutionalist states as constructing international society's core and thus its 'principal agents'.⁷⁷ The present-day global international society is presented as global but the community of liberal-constitutionalist states remains at its core. It has prevailed as the winning coalition following last century's major conflicts, most recently the Cold War. The core states have been principal agents in the production and reproduction of the practices underpinning international society, the 'vanguard group' able to shape international society values.⁷⁸

A number of works are less explicit in the reification of international society. Robert Jackson has been very consistent in presenting international society in normative terms: 'Modern international society is basically a normative framework by reference to which foreign policy, diplomacy, the threat or use of armed force, and other international activities are to be judged'.⁷⁹ But such accounts are not unproblematic. They usually portray international society as a moral success contributing to interstate order: 'the enormous moral achievement that is represented by the building of a global international society based on state sovereignty'.⁸⁰ Also in this case international society ceases to be an interpretation and becomes a tangible fact, lending itself to be ethically evaluated. It is no longer just an assumption in the minds of statesmen.

In conjuncture with the process of reification, international society has been not only validated but praised. Academic literature has usually presented it in positive light, as bringing order (Bull) or as acting for the benefit of common humanity (Wheeler). Wheeler described it even as a 'guardian angel'.⁸¹ The English School discourse is filled with appreciative adjectives, such as common, nouns such as order, commitment, values, and consensus: 'International society is generally understood as the consensus which binds states together through a common commitment to certain minimum values such as sovereign independence and respect for international law'⁸²; 'international society refers to the

⁷⁷ C. Reus-Smit, "The constitutional structure of international society and the nature of fundamental institutions", *International Organization*, 51: 4, 1997: 584-585; Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*.

⁷⁸ Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 223.

⁷⁹ Jackson, *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, 31.

⁸⁰ Jackson, *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, 37.

⁸¹ Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society*, x.

⁸² R. Fawn and J. Mayall, "Recognition, self-determination and secession in post-Cold War international society", in *International society after the Cold War: anarchy and order reconsidered*, ed. R. Fawn and J. Larkins (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 193.

interstate order in which the members recognize each other, share common interests, and agree to be bound by certain minimal rules of coexistence'.⁸³

Further steps in reification: theorizing, mapping and teaching

Even critical engagements with international society tend to reinforce rather than question the reified framework. Despite the fact that historical inaccuracies were identified in a 'Eurocentric grand narrative', authors who argue that up to the 19th century the development of norms and rules was the result of two-way interactions between Europe and other regions, do not question international society *per se* but only the narrative of its emergence. Scholars choosing to examine international society and its membership requirements from the point of view of the non-Western world are right in castigating the overreliance on the West European example and in exposing the superficiality of order built on the supposedly shared foundations of international society.⁸⁴ The English School was criticised for the neglect of coercive aspects of international society's expansion and for presenting the expansion as a progressive and positive process.⁸⁵ The inequality theme found its reflection in the debate about the standard of civilisation.⁸⁶ The narrative that developed around the standard of civilization emphasized that Western states, in their encounters with non-Western societies before the early twentieth century, considered themselves to be the representatives of genuine (read 'better') civilisation. This belief justified the expansion of their own social, political, legal and cultural norms and practices beyond Western Europe.⁸⁷

⁸³ T. Dunne, "Good citizen Europe", *International Affairs*, 84: 1, 2008: 15.

⁸⁴ The modern world's history, Keene argued, was divided into two different patterns of international political and legal order. Institutional and legal structures of that order developed differently in Europe and beyond. While European order was tolerant with regard to ethnic, cultural and political difference, the 'extra-European' one was preoccupied with the civilizing mission – inward world of promoting toleration and outward of promoting civilization. Keene, *Beyond the anarchical society: Grotius, colonialism and order in world politics*, 41.

⁸⁵ Suzuki, *Civilization and empire: China and Japan's encounter with European international society*.

⁸⁶ G. W. Gong, *The Standard Of "Civilization" In International Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

⁸⁷ For more recent engagement and contemporary interpretations of the standard of civilisation, see: Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*; Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*. See also: B. Bowden, "In the Name of Progress and Peace: The 'Standard of Civilization' And the Universalizing Project", *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29:1, 2004; B. Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*, Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2009; B. Bowden and L. Seabrooke, "Global Standards of Market Civilization," in *Civilizational Identity: The Production and Reproduction of 'Civilisations' in International Relations*, ed. M. Hall and P. T. Jackson (New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); J. Donnelly, "Human Rights: A New Standard of Civilization?" *International Affairs* 74: 1, 1998; G. W. Gong, "Standards of Civilization Today," in *Globalization and Civilizations*, ed. M. Mozaffari (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

The challenge to the orthodox view posed by these works was not thorough-going. They did not question international society *per se*, taking issue solely with elements favourable to states that might otherwise be termed imperialist. The insistence on the ‘dualistic nature of order’ does not dismiss the idea of order nor does it problematize this order’s existence. That some sort of international society, however unequal, existed, was not the key point of contention. Nor was the historicised narrative of its *emergence*. The expansion of international society continued to be the overarching frame even if the focus was on the attitudes of Western states towards the ‘encountered’ political orders.⁸⁸

Against the backdrop of growing criticisms and accusations of Eurocentrism, Barry Buzan advocated a more ‘scientific’ approach to international society and pledged to offer a thorough structural reconceptualization of the classical premises of the English School. He promised to add more precision to the study of international society by refining its key concepts. The English School scholarship was now to be a systematically organised field of study. He perceived international system, international society and world society as analytical concepts revealing the material and social structures of the international. In order to introduce the coherence deemed necessary to build a clear theoretical framework, Buzan proposed to understand relations between individuals as first-order society and those between collectives, such as states, as second order societies. The picture was supplemented by primary and secondary institutions of international society.⁸⁹ This theoretical contribution was to allow for considering international order globally with a simultaneous appreciation of the regional perspective.

Buzan’s chief objective was to position the English School as a self-standing approach within IR. Among the unintended consequence has been the neutralization of international society. The society of states becomes a theoretical framework, a neutral tool that facilitates the exploration and understanding of the international realm. In *Theorising International Society* authors, following in Buzan’s footsteps, reinforce international society as a

⁸⁸ The existence of international society is not questioned even in works purported to be critical of the idea. Bellamy approached international society as existing and advocated a more nuanced engagement with it: ‘the School needs [...] to identify and explore the many structures that underpin international society’ A. J. Bellamy, “Introduction: international society and the English school”, in *International society and its critics*, ed. A.J. Bellamy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 25.

⁸⁹ Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 14; B. Buzan, “The Middle East through English school theory”, in *International society and the Middle East: English school theory at the regional level*, ed. B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25-27.

theoretical framework.⁹⁰ One contribution to this edited volume stands out for its acknowledgement of the role of viewpoints. It approaches international society as an ideal type and argues that ‘any ideal type is, in effect, an interpretation of the social world in terms of a particular set of cultural values’ and ‘is always constructed from a particular point of view’.⁹¹

A move parallel to proposing international society as a theory of IR was to map this theory globally and onto regional developments. Together with the greater regional integration observed in practice, the need arose to account for the regional dynamics at play in *global international society*.⁹² This scholarship claims that elements of international society at the global level are to be found at the sub-global scale and that some societal aspects may be more pronounced regionally than globally. Certain regional states’ groupings may represent ‘greater normative content’ or increased consciousness of common interests and values and, thus, a propensity for the joint formulation of specific common rules and institutions.⁹³

While the discussion of regions in terms of international societies is in many respects illuminating, it has important limitations. The two key analyses exploring the Buzanian version of the English School in a regional context focused on the Middle East and Scandinavia. In spite of the close application of Buzan’s theoretical approach, the results of

⁹⁰ Navari, *Theorising international society: English school methods*.

⁹¹ E. Keene, “International society as an ideal type”, in *Theorising international society: English school methods*, ed. C. Navari (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 107. Keene, however, does not fully explore the implications of his critique and his argument about the simultaneous existence of two international orders ultimately reifies international society. This is mitigated by Keene’s later contribution, which criticizes the international society expansion paradigm, ultimately resting on the reified notion of the ‘family of civilised nations’. E. Keene, “The Standard of ‘Civilisation’, the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-century International Social Space”, *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 42: 3, 2014.

⁹² Dunne, “System, State and Society: How does it all hang together?”: 159.

⁹³ These studies usually take as their point of departure the structural version of the English School introduced by Barry Buzan *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*. For further discussion regarding characteristics of regional international societies, see M. Ayoob, “From regional system to regional society: Exploring key variables in the construction of regional order”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 53: 3, 1999: 248. Buzan, “The Middle East through English school theory”; Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian international society: primary institutions and binding forms, 1815-2010*. Other regional groupings approached from the English School perspective, though not necessarily the structural version of it, include: the European Union, Stivachtis and Webber, “Regional International Society in a Post-Enlargement Europe”; J. Czaputowicz, “The English school of international relations and its approach to European integration”, *Studies&Analyses*, 2: 2, 2003; T. Diez and R. Whitman, “Analysing European Integration: Reflecting on the English School”, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40: 1, 2002. R. Sakwa, “Russia and Europe: whose society?”, *European Integration*, 33: 2, 2011, the Association of Southwest Asian Nation, S. Narine, “The English school and ASEAN”, *The Pacific Review*, 19: 2, 2006, South East Asia, L. Quayle, *Southeast Asia and the English School of International Relations: a region-theory dialogue*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2013. Arguably, the regional dimension had been present in Wight’s states systems, in particular when he proposed the study of the ‘comparative sociology of states systems’ Wight, *Systems of states*.

these studies were inconclusive.⁹⁴ More importantly, the unintended consequence has been that international society became closely linked with geography. It was turned into a structure that can be mapped onto the ground. These steps consolidated the recognition of international society universality and reinforced the mistaken perception of the absence of its ideological underpinnings.

Presenting international society as a theory and ‘applying’ it in global and regional analyses have not been the only moves contributing to naturalisation and reification of international society. The teaching practice has not been spared the reified presentation of international society. Textbooks are a source of primary data in sociology of knowledge and worth paying attention to for their educational and repository function. They are generally held to be authoritative. They delineate what is worth knowing and work as guidebooks for students and examiners. The way international society is represented in textbooks is thus worth looking into. Despite the well-argued charge of generalisation waged against Bull’s *The Anarchical society*⁹⁵, several IR textbooks continue approaching international society as an unquestioned being, part of international reality existing out there.⁹⁶ The Oxford University Press textbook *The globalization of international politics: an introduction to international relations* by John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens is one prominent example. The handbook is recommended as ‘the leading introduction to international relations’ and its two latest editions (4th and 5th) both dedicate separate chapters to the *emergence* and the *globalization* of international society.⁹⁷ The chapter entitled “The evolution of international society” presents international society as ‘composed of interconnected but independent sovereign states’ and concludes that ‘the collapse of the Soviet Union from 1989 completed the globalization of international society’.⁹⁸ Such framing

⁹⁴ A. Gonzalez-Pelaez, “The Primary Institutions of the Middle Eastern Regional Interstate Society”, in *International society and the Middle East: English school theory at the regional level*, ed. B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 114-115.; S. W. Murden, “The Secondary Institutions of the Middle Eastern Regional Interstate Society”, in *International society and the Middle East: English school theory at the regional level*, ed. B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁹⁵ J. Edkins and M. Zehfuss, “Generalising the international”, *Review of International Studies*, 31: 3, 2005.

⁹⁶ Problems stemming from an approach to studying IR which heralds certainty regarding the type of the post-Cold war international order were thoroughly discussed in *ibid*. Their critique suggests we should think about international politics in terms of ‘the generalised international’. But even if this phrase is explained by the authors as a sphere where complexity and diversity persists, in light of this chapter’s discussion, the linguistic choice of the phrase should be called into question.

⁹⁷ J. Baylis, S. Smith, and P. Owens, *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*, Fourth ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2007, 48; J. Baylis, S. Smith, and P. Owens, *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*, Fifth ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2010, 45.

⁹⁸ Even though the author mentions that international society as a term came to be applied to a particular historical narrative, this relativizing is not thorough as he concludes that international society ‘has been present

reifies international society into a spatial being, an entity that can be located on a map. Through such geographical framing, international society acquires materiality. The placing of the discussion is part of the textbook entitled *Historical context* additionally legitimizes the view of international society as a material entity evolving through history.

Another Oxford University Press textbook, *Introduction to International Relations: theories and approaches*, makes a reference to Bull and Watson's *The Expansion of international society* but considers the history of international politics in terms of the globalisation of the *state system* rather than globalisation of international society. Authors state very clearly that international society is a 'tradition in IR', which emphasises the importance of international relations based on rules and norms of international law, international organisations and diplomatic activity. There are, however, several instances when international society becomes reified and universalised quite apart from the representation of it as just one among many theoretical approaches. The discussion about two elements of juridical statehood – constitutional independence and recognition – attests that both are needed to 'pave the way for membership in International Society'. Reified international society becomes indispensable in the debate of international responsibility, when statespeople are said to have responsibility to international society and its members.⁹⁹

The right kind of state member

Speaking about international society in terms of its agential powers and goals it was supposed to achieve, was paralleled by the greater recognition of a particular type of state and its role in the society of states.

Sovereign statehood has always been present in the conception of international society but with the reification of 'solidarist international society' came greater recognition of a particular standard and greater emphasis on state's roles in the society of states. How a state was governed *inside* – which generally was not an issue for early English School theorists, content with legal recognition of external attributes of stateness granted by international law – came to be exceedingly relevant to the conception of international society.

in different forms throughout world history', see: D. Armstrong, "The evolution of international society" In *The globalization of world politics...*, p. 37.

⁹⁹ R. Jackson and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to international relations: theories and approaches*, Third ed., Oxford University Press: 2007, 19, 26, 147.

Despite the broad agreement among the classical English School scholars that the state is the foundation on which international society rests, reflections on the concept of the state were not particularly sophisticated in the early English School writings.¹⁰⁰ The focus on interstate relations led classical authors – Manning, Wight and Bull – to leave the question of what constitutes a state aside. Classical international society scholars refrained from problematizing ‘the state’, perhaps purposefully – in their endeavour to have ‘a field of their own’ and distinguish themselves from political scientists.¹⁰¹ Manning did not delve into any details when he suggested that the state is composed of the machinery of government, citizenry and territory.¹⁰² For him it was sufficient to argue that ‘the “person” of international society is typically a sovereign state, and this by the nature of its constitution’.¹⁰³ Wight did ask about the ‘kinds of members’ of international society and proposed distinguishing ‘the structure of the state (e.g. city-state, feudal kingdom, nation-state, federation) from the structure of government (e.g. democracy, dictatorship)’.¹⁰⁴ A certain degree of disregard for the internal arrangements of state was perpetuated by James’ theory of state sovereignty based solely on states’ legal claim to constitutional independence.¹⁰⁵

A significant development has been Wight’s claim that international society made the legitimacy of a particular form of government a matter of importance for the entire international community. This characteristic was said to distinguish the present day international society from its predecessors.¹⁰⁶ Subsequent authors paid more attention to states’ specificities. *The Expansion’s* authors pondered the adequacy of the term state to denote the political reality of the post-colonial entities which did not accept certain European norms, especially that of constitutional law: ‘...one may also doubt whether (...) the state is still a shared experience or reference and whether we can count on the existence of an

¹⁰⁰ The centrality of the state has been present throughout the history of the English School scholarship: ‘English school theory is based on the idea that there is something special and unique about the state (...) that justifies giving it a prominent and distinctive role in the conceptualization of international relations’ Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 91. ‘According to the light in which we observe [the social cosmos] we may see it as made up of human individuals; of movements, groups, collectives, organisations...or, of sovereign states.’ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 2.

¹⁰¹ The ‘domestic analogy’, an attempt to transpose the parameters of internal governance of a state to the international realm, was generally criticised by the English School. Anarchy between states was not to be tamed by a form of world government but by the societal interactions and relations between the states. H. Suganami, “British institutionalists, or the English School, 20 years on”, *International Relations*, 17: 3, 2003: 253. The rejection of the domestic analogy might have been another factor deterring a more profound engagement with the ‘inside’ of a state.

¹⁰² Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 21-22.

¹⁰³ Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 166.

¹⁰⁴ Wight, *Systems of states*, 41.

¹⁰⁵ A. James, *Sovereign statehood: the basis of international society*, London: Allen & Unwin: 1986.

¹⁰⁶ Wight, *Systems of states*, 41.

organically unified system of states'.¹⁰⁷ Despite their declared adherence to the value of pluralism, contributors to *The Expansion* came to regard only a particular type of state as desired and, consequently, as the inevitable outcome of international society's spatial expansion. Unless a political entity was organised according to a specific model, it could not take part – let alone play a role – in international society. Watson illustrated this with the example of Russia:

The gradual Westernization of Russia ... and the establishment by Peter the Great of an *effective Westernized state* gave Russia in the 18th and 19th century ... the desire and the ability to play a major part both in the management of European international society and the expansion of *European government and technology to Asia*¹⁰⁸

It was relatively unproblematic to argue that in Western Europe, as a result of historical events, states evolved from units predicated on monarchical patriarchy towards entities expressing and furthering interests of their citizens.¹⁰⁹ That such 'moral purpose of the state' was a universal one was, however, far less clear. What aided the process of naturalizing this conception was presenting the international in terms of the society of states. International society framework required a particular kind of state. The argument about international society expansion and its global reach was followed by the debate about 'rightful membership',¹¹⁰ 'what constitutes a legitimate state?'¹¹¹ and states that may not 'fit'.¹¹²

Robert Jackson famously classified states not matching international society as 'quasi-states'.¹¹³ His aim was to describe those states that, although *admitted* into international society, were unable to govern themselves or lacked 'positive sovereignty' understood as the ability to satisfy the needs of their populations. Following decolonization, according to the narrative advanced by Jackson, ex-colonial states entered the 'game' even though they had neither been 'empowered domestically' nor possessed 'institutional features of sovereign

¹⁰⁷ A. Bozeman, "The international order in a multicultural world", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 400.

¹⁰⁸ Watson, "Russia and the European States System". emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁹ C. Reus-Smit, *The moral purpose of the state: culture, social identity, and institutional rationality in international relations*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1999, 127-128. Reus-Smit saw the 'moral purpose of the modern state' in its capacity and obligation to augment individual's purposes and in the cultivation of social, political and economic order that makes it possible for individuals to engage in pursuing their interests', *ibid.*, 123.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*.

¹¹¹ Reus-Smit, *The moral purpose of the state: culture, social identity, and institutional rationality in international relations*, 134.

¹¹² Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* For Jackson, as previously for Manning, an appropriate metaphor for relations between states in a society was that of a game as a rule-constituted and rule-governed activity Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*, 4; Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 108.

states'. Jackson's work galvanized the idea that a state in international society cannot be any kind of state. Quasi-states needed to 'grow up' and take up responsibilities of what the author presented as regular members.

Reus-Smit, for whom the starting point of the analysis was 'modern international society' built on the pillars of contractual international law and multilateralism, argued that international society's intersubjective values have a bearing on a state's identity and provide the rules of rightful state action.¹¹⁴ Reus-Smit was explicit in how the international informs the particular at the state level:

Societies of states, I have argued, are ordered by constitutional structures. These complexes of metavalues define the social identity of the state, and the broad parameters of legitimate state action'¹¹⁵ and 'I have argued that international institutional action is shaped by deep constitutive values. Societies of states are communities of mutual recognition; they are bound together by intersubjective meanings that define what constitutes a legitimate state and what counts as appropriate state conduct.¹¹⁶

Clark developed these arguments further arguing that legitimacy, which he regarded as crucial for the conceptualization of international society, was composed of rightful membership and rightful conduct:

The core principles of legitimacy express rudimentary social agreement about who is entitled to participate in international relations, and also about appropriate forms in their conduct (...) This represents the very essence of what is meant by an international society: *legitimacy thus denotes the existence of international society*.¹¹⁷

The historical analysis of international society undertaken by Clark was organised according to the following narrative. In the eighteenth century, international society members were designated on the basis of legitimate succession. In the post-World War I period, the recognition of minority rights was a membership criterion for states of South and Eastern Europe. In the post-Cold War era, the extent to which international society shaped standards

¹¹⁴ Reus-Smit, "The constitutional structure of international society and the nature of fundamental institutions": 584-585; Reus-Smit, *The moral purpose of the state: culture, social identity, and institutional rationality in international relations*, 36-39.

¹¹⁵ Reus-Smit, *The moral purpose of the state: culture, social identity, and institutional rationality in international relations*, 39.

¹¹⁶ Reus-Smit, *The moral purpose of the state: culture, social identity, and institutional rationality in international relations*, 156.

¹¹⁷ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 2, italics in original.

regarding internal arrangements of the state, in Clark's denomination the principles of rightful membership, broadened and the processes accelerated.¹¹⁸ Since the 1990s, a liberal democracy, characterised by adherence to human rights and good governance principles, constituted a legitimate state.¹¹⁹ The framing of international society-state nexus becomes explicit in the following paragraph:

It is not peoples alone who enjoy their separate national rights to democratic governance but international society itself claims a collective right to ensure such national democracy, by dint of its entitlement to enjoy international peace.¹²⁰

Clark intended to distance himself from this vision, which was presented as an account of what proceeds in the international realm. He was also cautious in casting judgements on these developments. We may infer his critical assessment from comparisons he made between contemporary membership criteria and the expectation for states to live up to acceptable international standards to the old European standard of civilization.¹²¹ The very fact, however, that Clark decided to portray international politics as international society and decided to choose membership and conduct as defining features, perpetuated the claim that only one type of a state fits international society. As Clark describes:

Many of the key issues that have exercised policymakers since 1990 – such as humanitarian intervention, democracy promotion, the development/security interface, post-conflict reconstruction, the identification and treatment of rogue states, and regime change – are all at base symptomatic of the paradigm shift currently being experienced in international society's conception of rightful membership. To the extent that international society has it in its capacity to legitimize certain types of

¹¹⁸ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 26-28, 119, 252.

¹¹⁹ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 26-28, 159.

¹²⁰ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 182.

¹²¹ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 183. The standard of civilisation constitutes an important part of English school analysis of world politics and it has been usually tied to the narrative of international society's expansion. The standard of civilisation was said to have originated in Europe in the nineteenth century in order to explain and legitimise the expansion of powerful states. The standard of civilisation involved a tacit or explicit set of rules that enabled a distinction to be made between those states that belonged to a particular, allegedly more advanced grouping, and those that did not. The standard of civilisation was premised on and perpetuated the division between the advanced, privileged rule makers, on the one hand, and on the other those who followed—willingly or through coercion. As it became enshrined in international law, gaining the status of the status of a legal doctrine, the standard took on an increasingly explicit character. As the standard itself was a broad and evolving category, the goals of its application in the nineteenth century were far from uniform. Besides protecting Europeans in 'uncivilised' countries, it served to bar certain states from participating in international society, to impose unequal treaties on them, to legitimise colonisation and to impose specific policies, institutions and values on non-Western states. Gong, *The Standard Of "Civilization"*, 4, 21, 57-64.

states, this in turn specifies the precise relationship between the member states and international society itself.¹²²

For Hurrell deeper cooperation between states based on the agreement about what constitutes a common good was the reason behind the growing pressure for a specific domestic arrangement of the state:

As cooperation comes increasingly to involve the creation of rules that affect very deeply the domestic structures and organization of states, that invest individuals and groups within states with rights and duties, and that seek to embody some notion of common good (human rights, democratization, the environment, the construction of more elaborate and intrusive inter-state security orders), then these questions of society and community re-emerge.¹²³

What ensued was that quasi-states started to be explored *expressis verbis* as *problems* for international society.¹²⁴ There is a much broader literature, beyond the explicit adherence to or sympathy with the English School, which reifies ‘international community’ and on that basis produces requirements regarding the state. The inability of quasi-states to sustain themselves ‘as members of international community’ is the focal point of such discussions. Achieving a certain version of statehood is a necessary condition for a state to be acknowledged as an ‘equal member of international society’.¹²⁵ Some see a state’s claim to sovereignty as composed of two types of contract: one between a state and its citizens and one between a state and the international community. The latter is premised on the adherence to *international* norms and standards of accountability and transparency.¹²⁶ What follows quite naturally from these deliberations is the claim that: ‘We study how states collapsed in

¹²² Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 160.

¹²³ A. Hurrell, “International society and the study of regimes - a reflective approach”, in *Regime theory and international relations*, ed. V. Rittberger and P. Mayer (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1993), 65.

¹²⁴ Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*; M. Ayoob, “Humanitarian intervention and international society”, *Global Governance*, 7, 2001.

¹²⁵ D. Brautigam, “Introduction: taxation and state-building in developing countries”, in *Taxation and state-building in developing countries: capacity and consent*, ed. D. Brautigam, O.-H. Fjeldstad, and M. Moore (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 78. See also G. B. Helman and S. R. Ratner, “Saving Failed States”, *Foreign Policy*: 89, 1992: 3-9. What is supposed to be a state has become so ingrained that scholars such as Timothy Garton Ash in op-eds resort to concepts such as ‘a normal European state’, see T.G. Ash, “At stake in Ukraine's drama is the future of Putin, Russia and Europe”, *The Guardian*, 21.02.2014.

¹²⁶ A. Ghani and C. Lockhart, *Fixing failed states: a framework for rebuilding a fractured world*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press: 2008, 8.

order to learn how to put them back together ... the reconstruction of the sovereign state is necessary ... statehood needs to be reconstituted in the modern age'.¹²⁷

The 'model state' has become the most conspicuous element of what some scholars qualify as the new standard of civilization. The standard, in its refurbished version, is said to be exposed mainly in trade and financial regulations.¹²⁸ Brett Bowden argued persuasively that the global market serves as a 'civilizer of peoples and societies' both in their domestic and external relations.¹²⁹ But the 'standard' resurfaces also in terms of the capacity of a state to engage with international society as well and the very type of state, its administrative functions, adequate internal organisation and government accountability.¹³⁰

The standard of civilization is one way of approaching the problem. A parallel approach, and one pursued by the English School, is to see the natural process of greater convergence among states. Since international society requires not only a type of 'fellow feeling' but also the sense that the other is 'of one's own kind',¹³¹ a conclusion was reached that convergence in the type of state may be a significant element for order and security:

Pluralism is abandoned when states not only recognise that they are alike..., but see that a significant degree of similarity is valuable, and seek to reinforce the security and legitimacy of their own values by consciously linking with others who are like-minded, building a shared identity with them.¹³²

Hurrell approached the theme from a different angle. He noticed that a state-centred vision of the international automatically requires a particular state:

For a state-centred conception of international order it is clearly of immense importance if a significant number of *weak states* are no longer able to provide the kinds of localized order that the statist model presumes.¹³³

¹²⁷ I. W. Zartman, *Collapsed states: the disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*, Boulder, Colo ; London: Lynne Rienner: 1995, 267.

¹²⁸ Gong, "Standards of Civilization Today". See also Donnelly, "Human Rights: A New Standard of Civilization?"

¹²⁹ B. Bowden, "Civilization, Standards and Markets," in *Global Standards of Market Civilization*, ed. B. Bowden and L. Seabrooke (London: Routledge, 2006), 11.

¹³⁰ Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*.

¹³¹ R. Dore, "Unity and diversity in world culture", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 408.

¹³² Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 147-148.

¹³³ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 76.

Despite the fact that the classical English School approach to the state limited the membership of international society to sovereign states without referring to the states' internal qualities, the right kind of state became more and more central, along with the process of reification and universalisation of international society.

Conclusion: international society reified

Arguably, the most contentious element in the scholarly treatment of international society is its ontological status, largely resulting from inconsistency in the approaches developed by classical authors. Some scholars approach international society as really existing and as such amenable to empirical study. Others would claim it is solely a normative framework and this camp is further divided into those suggesting it is an actually existing framework, and those viewing it as an ideal beyond reach but worth striving for. The third camp approaches it as an analytical framework, a device aiding the study and broadening our understanding of international politics. These three strands are not neatly delineated in academic works. For Jackson, international society was a 'moral and legal framework';¹³⁴ for Clark it was a political framework but one which allowed for the application of 'constitutionally mediated' norms. In his other writings Clark presented international society in terms of 'historically changing principles of legitimacy'.¹³⁵

That various authors differ as to their conceptions of international society was first pointed out in Grader's analysis of the English School scholarship. She noted that for Manning it was metaphysical, for Bull empirical and normative, while others, such as Northedge, would opt for a system rather than society of states.¹³⁶ In a reply to Grader's criticism, Peter Wilson argued that international society is ideational and norm-based for both Manning and Bull.¹³⁷

While acknowledging that writings on international society are not unified and that the English School itself is a contentious concept, this chapter illustrated how a specific portrayal of the international influences conceptions and expectations with regard to the state. I explored the process through which the idea of international society became reified and has

¹³⁴ Jackson, *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, 39.

¹³⁵ Clark, *Legitimacy in international society*, 7.

¹³⁶ Grader, "The English School of International Relations: Evidence and Evaluation".

¹³⁷ Wilson, "The English School of International Relations: A Reply to Sheila Grader". For a broader exposition of this debate and its broader setting regarding the foundations and ramifications of the English school, see Linklater and Sukanami, *The English school of international relations: a contemporary reassessment*.

been employed not only as a neutral explanatory framework but came to be identified as a spatial entity and a construct in possession of agency. I argued that this reification is inseparable from and spurs the expectation for a particular model of a state.

Reification takes place when a description is granted the character of a thing and acquires a phantom objectivity, seemingly rational autonomy to the extent that it conceals trace of its fundamental nature.¹³⁸ Reification is the ‘tendency to forget that concepts and theories cannot capture the full, dynamic, constantly changing nature of things-as-such (...) reification gives particular, contingent, and contestable agendas a false sense of necessity, inevitability, scientific objectivity, or naturalness’.¹³⁹ IR theory has not been spared the charge of reification. Daniel Levine saw reifications encouraged by all IR theoretical approaches. Reification, explained as a ‘kind of forgetting’ that there existed a distinction between theoretical concepts and real-world objects to which they refer or which they purport to describing, progressively naturalizes academic concepts. Levine argued that reification is intertwined with the process of academic production of paradigmatic research programmes. Unchecked, reification may slip into ‘vulgar messianism’ and leave scholars trapped into a world of their own ‘reified mediations’.¹⁴⁰

Reification and agentification are problematic processes in all social studies but in case of IR study they have especially far-reaching consequences. The knowledge production process presents ideas such as international society not only in a compelling way but also in a way which makes them seem unquestionably positive and universally accepted. Such framing may stimulate the thinking that values and policies pursued by one state or a group of states can be treated as though they were the values and policies of all. Of course it can be argued that producing a coherent scholarly narrative requires generalization. The danger is when we forget that we are generalizing. Representing international society as a contingent historical fact, a spatial entity or as a timeless and universally applicable theory are instances of

¹³⁸ E. Cudworth, T. Hall, and J. McGovern, *The modern state. Theories and Ideologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2007, 107.

¹³⁹ D.J. Levine and A. D. Barder, "The closing of the American mind: ‘American School’ International Relations and the state of grand theory", *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:4, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Levine, *Recovering international relations: the promise of sustainable critique*, 14-16, 23. Levine structured his critique of IR theorists into three sections: realism, communitarianism and individualism. He engaged with E.H. Carr under the communitarian banner but international society as theorised by scholars discussed in this thesis, remains beyond the scope of Levine’s analysis. The author seems to be embracing the English School as part of an innovative approach to normative IR theorising (p. 80). The aim of his scholarly endeavour is also markedly different from the objective pursued in this thesis. Levine set out to assemble a ‘sustainably critical’ IR theory which would acknowledge that all IR disciplinary traditions are unions of fact and value (p. 25).

reification. The risks of such reification are magnified by the fact that these views have been expressed from the position of authority accorded to the academia.

CHAPTER 3 The world as international community and the imperative to build states

*A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language
and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably¹*

Introduction

The second chapter of this thesis illustrated the process through which the idea of international society became reified in academic discourse and facilitated the linking of the seemingly existent and global international society to a requirement for a particular model of a state. Deliberations presented in Chapter Two prompted the question about ways in which the idea of international society operates in contemporary international relations practice. The English School cannot claim the power to influence political practice but it is important to acknowledge multiple analogies between meanings and characteristics ascribed to international society by academics and the notion of international community produced by policy discourse.² While it would be impossible to claim there existed a causal link between the idea of international society advanced by the English School and the political discourse of international community, both of these ideas represent the international, tend to have positive connotations and the way they are discussed is prone to reification. My objective in the present chapter is to explore ways in which the idea of international community operates in contemporary politics, processes through which it becomes commonsensical, gains power and real-life consequences.

This chapter argues that the policy world idea of international community galvanised a requirement for a state to meet a variety of *international* standards, it allows for states classification and creates conditions that make it hard to imagine a model of a state other than democratic and institutions-based. It thus depoliticizes the state, which becomes an obvious

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, John Wiley & Sons 2010, 129.

² A number of policy community experts, interviewed as part of this research, mentioned their educational background, indicating their familiarity with the English School (interviews conducted in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, December 2012). In an email communication of 7 July 2014 Robert Jackson confirmed that there has been policy interest in his book, *The quasi-state*. According to William Bain, Jackson's doctoral student, the book did make a significant impact at the time of its first edition in early 1990s when the weak state issue came to the fore. Along with it arose the humanitarian intervention debate, which was a response to the weak state phenomenon. In Bain's view Jackson was probably the most important voice at the time, since he did more to theorise weak states and explain them in the context of the language of international order and international relations (email communication with Dr William Bain, 2 July 2014).

constellation of specific institutions and norms based on the rule of law. This idea legitimizes statebuilding policies and allows for the representation of these practices as unquestionably good and those who undertake them as agents of international community.

This chapter takes as its starting point the observation that in one particular policy area, that of development cooperation, the discourse of international community and policies of international statebuilding are not only intertwined but mutually indispensable.³ Statebuilding is presented as an activity undertaken in the name of international community and it relies on a particular understanding, description and, ultimately, reification of this community. The need for statebuilding arises from what international community is considered to be and the activity is carried out by those claiming to represent it. The reified idea of international community allows for the discursive construction and legitimation of a particular state member. This paves the way for policies directed at the implementation of the desired model.

The production of international community discourse

The language of political practice is filled with appeals to and invocations of international community. Even though the term is in ubiquitous use, this pervasiveness has not rendered it utterly devalued. On the contrary, not only has it become an idea of high currency but more and more power is accorded to it. International community is able to *organise* humanitarian action, *end* suffering, *denounce* violence, and even *build* states. According to this narrative, the international community acts for the sake of order, economic development and poverty reduction. From that we may infer that international community not only has agency but is, in fact, exceptionally powerful. But, despite international community being presented as possessing agency, obligations and power, contemporary IR literature generally stops short of discussing the role and functions of the term international community as part of discourse. Surely, the potency of international community is not sustained by any concrete material factor, like that of nuclear

³ Statebuilding, though escapes clear definition, tends to be associated with *longue durée* processes of forming domestic order, establishing state-society relations and nation-building. C. Tilly, *Coercion, capital, and European states, A.D.990-1990*, Oxford : Basil Blackwell: 1997 [1990]; C. Tilly and G. Ardant, *The Formation of national States in Western Europe*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1975; J. S. Migdal, *Strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the Third World*, Chichester; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1988. In the post-Cold War period international statebuilding came to denote the involvement of a third party in state formation processes primarily in the post-conflict situations. S. Chesterman, *You, the people: the United Nations, transitional administration, and state-building*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press: 2004. This thesis refers to international statebuilding as encompassing different types and degrees of involvement into other state's affairs with the view to creating, amending or adjusting its polity, governance or socio-economic situation. The growing body of literature on statebuilding continues proposing new definitions. Those less critically oriented, tend to emphasize the technical side of international statebuilding, essentially identifying it as a technical 'project' to be implemented. P. C. McMahon and J. W. Western, "Introduction: The supply side of statebuilding", in *The international community and statebuilding: getting its act together?*, ed. P.C. McMahon and J.W. Western (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 1. The critically oriented writing equates international statebuilding with liberal imperialism D. Chandler, ed., *Statebuilding and intervention: policies, practices and paradigms*, (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2009). Development cooperation (or development aid) is an umbrella term accorded policies focused on supporting economic, social and political development of states classified as developing. Statebuilding may be classified as one branch of development cooperation.

weapons. Its authority stems from the *usage* of this special term and the values attached to it. Crucially, it renders power to those who claim to represent the international community. Since ideas, especially those aspiring at universality, as well as the language used to express them, have their real-life consequences, questioning *international community* becomes a task of perennial importance. International community is just a representation but as a dominant narrative in policy discourse produced around the project of development assistance, statebuilding in particular, facilitates and reinforces the unquestioned acceptance of a state-model and steers policies geared towards its attainment.

There is no neat separation between the ivory tower employing the term ‘international society’ and the policy practice world with its preference for ‘international community’. The international community discourse is coproduced by practitioners and scholars. Beyond the English School, the idea of international community features prominently in academic writing. Appearing in a variety of contexts, on most occasions it is employed indiscriminately. Authors who do not ponder the concept in and of itself, but make use of it in their writing on international affairs, regularly equate international community with the West, or more broadly, democratic states. They also tend to use international community and international society interchangeably.⁴

Academic literature treats international community usually as a rhetorical and legitimizing device.⁵ International community has also been presented as ‘a desirable end-goal which should be achieved for global governance to be effective’ and as ‘a community of morals, ethics, and common identities’.⁶ Scholars have been perplexed by the potential moral agency of international community.⁷ Some argue that it may be rhetoric, practice and a specific actor group.⁸ Bliesemann De Guevara and Kühn rightly suggest we should be approaching ‘international community’ in the various contexts in which it is used by actors. This allows the exploration of changing images and protagonists of ‘international community’ in contexts such as e.g. intervention in Afghanistan or manipulations of the image of international community by local elites in the Balkans.⁹ Back in 2003, the *Foreign Policy* journal dedicated a forum to the question, ‘What is the international

⁴ Martha Brill Olcott writes on Central Asia: ‘international society helped Kyrgyzstan into its current crisis’. M. B. Olcott, *Central Asia's second chance*, Washington, D.C., Bristol: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, University Presses Marketing: 2005, 106; ‘The Tajik government, weak and with only incomplete control of the country, turned to the international community for help’, Olcott, *Central Asia's second chance*, 23. Central Asia scholars tend to present international community in direct opposition to Russia, e.g. Anna Matveeva offered a comment on the Russian troops’ withdrawal from the Tajik-Afghan border in 2004-2005: ‘the international community stepped in to replace retreating Russia in a belief that it could do a better job dealing with the Tajik officials’. A. Matveeva, “Russia's changing security role in Central Asia”, *European Security*, 22: 4, 2013: 5.

⁵ B. Buzan and A. Gonzalez-Pelaez, “‘International community’ after Iraq”, *International Affairs*, 81: 1, 2005: 31; B. Bliesemann de Guevara and F. P. Kühn, “The ‘International Community’ – Rhetoric or Reality?”, *Security and Peace*, 2, 2009; D. C. Ellis, “On the Possibility of ‘International Community’”, *International Studies Review*, 11: 1, 2009.

⁶ Ellis, “On the Possibility of ‘International Community’”: 5.

⁷ A. Orford, “Muscular humanitarianism: reading the narratives of the new interventionism”, *European Journal of International Law*, 10: 4, 1999: 692.

⁸ Bliesemann de Guevara and Kühn, “The ‘International Community’ – Rhetoric or Reality?": 74.

⁹ Bliesemann de Guevara and Kühn, “The ‘International Community’ – Rhetoric or Reality?":

community', which exposed a variety of interpretations, ranging from idealised ('a shared vision for a better world') to highly critical ('a dangerous reference point for the naïve').¹⁰

Chris Brown asked whether international community is 'an unhelpful fiction' or, given the continuous use of the term, one could think of an agency-bearing collective body of states capable of undertaking action on behalf of 'common good'. He hesitantly concluded that 'it is unlikely that this [international community] is simply an illusion' but suggested that those who take an interest in the issue should stride away from international community, which could be equated with a 'rhetorical ploy' and look straight towards international society, the master concept of the English School, in order to gain 'intellectual substance'.¹¹ For adherents to the English School, international community comprises either a more solidarist form of international society¹² or is an exemplification of world society, which Buzan sees as a 'liberal, post-Westphalian nexus of states, transnational actors and individuals'.¹³

The flaw shared by most of the interpretations presented above is that they approach the problem too literally. *Foreign Policy* journal committed the same error that early English School theorists made in asking 'What is international society?'. Formulating the question in terms of 'what is' proceeds from a standpoint assuming there can be a satisfactory answer given to the query. Chapter Two explored in detail why this is problematic. Questions asked about international society and international community resemble a positivist search aspiring to discover and describe something material and existing in the *real* world to the disregard of potential strengths of reflexivist methodology in approaching this problem. On the other side of the spectrum, arguments for the contextualization of international community, though commendable, run the risk of removing one important aspect of international community discourse – its pretence at a universal representation of the international. 'Localisation', such as the one postulated by Bliesemann de Guevara and Kuhn, does not allow for engagement with consequences of according global reach and universal validity to international community.

International community and statebuilding: ideas in action

Not only has international statebuilding become a well-institutionalized policy field but it is claimed to have become *central* to contemporary world affairs.¹⁴ For considerable amount of time

¹⁰ *Foreign Policy*, 'What is the international community'. The forum's discussion was also reported/outlined in quite detail in: Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, "'International community' after Iraq": 32.

¹¹ Brown, "Moral agency and international society. Reflections on norms, the UN, the Gulf War, and the Kosovo campaign", 52-53.

¹² Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*.

¹³ Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, "'International community' after Iraq": 35-36.

¹⁴ For academic arguments claiming statebuilding to be high on the international agenda see e.g. P. Haldén, "Systems-building before state-building: on the systemic preconditions of state-building", *Conflict, Security & Development*, 10: 4, 2010; D. Chandler, *International statebuilding: the rise of post-liberal governance*, Oxon, New York: Routledge: 2010.

now leading academics and policy practitioners have underlined that statebuilding is the key task in contemporary world affairs. Francis Fukuyama claimed statebuilding to be ‘one of the most important issues for the world community’.¹⁵ Stephen Krasner confirmed this thesis: ‘I think that at this moment the biggest challenge is how to deal with failed and badly governed states’.¹⁶ A similar opinion was voiced by Iain Macleod, Legal Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office speaking at an event ‘The Role of Law in the Formulation of Policy’ at the Aberystwyth University.¹⁷ Among institutions dedicated to statebuilding are: OECD-DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility and Governance for Development and Peace. Despite the steadily growing scholarly output, two narratives seem to have dominated the field. On the one hand, the focus is on the ‘weak state’ problem, with the emphasis on or direct reiteration of the policymakers’ appeal that ‘something must be done’.¹⁸ International statebuilding is seen as the necessary response to state ‘fragility’, commonly explained as a state’s inability to deliver basic services to its citizens. External intervention is a desirable strategy of creating ‘functioning states’ or indeed of fostering sovereign statehood in weak states.¹⁹ On the other hand, the critical strand interprets international statebuilding as hiding the purpose of imperial domination. This literature emphasizes that international statebuilding policies usually ignore the needs and interests of those subject to intervention, which results in undermining the asserted goals of external involvement.²⁰ International statebuilding, as an interventionist undertaking, is said to reflect the unjust distribution of power. A range of statebuilding activities have been described as trusteeship (Bain), reworking of imperialism,²¹ practices of an ‘empire in denial’²² or as a form of ‘corruption of humanity’²³ or paternalism (Jackson).²⁴

¹⁵ F. Fukuyama, “The imperative of state-building”, *Journal of Democracy*, 15: 2, 2004: ix.

¹⁶ ‘Stephen Krasner on Sovereignty, Failed States and International Regimes Theory’, *Theory Talk*, Issue 21, 19 October 2008, <http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/10/theory-talk-21.html>.

¹⁷ ‘The Role of Law in the Formulation of Policy’ 6 February 2014, Aberystwyth University.

¹⁸ R. Caplan, *International governance of war-torn territories: rule and reconstruction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005; S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff and R. C. Thakur, *Making states work: state failure and the crisis of governance*, Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press: 2005.

¹⁹ A. Ghani, C. Lockhart and M. Carnahan, “Closing the Sovereignty Gap: an Approach to State-Building”, *ODI Working Paper*, Vol. 253; J.I. Chong, “How External Intervention Made the Sovereign State”, *Security Studies*, 19: 4, 2010.

²⁰ D. Chandler, “The uncritical critique of ‘liberal peace’” in *A liberal peace? The problems and practices of peacebuilding*, S. Campbell, D. Chandler and M. Sabaratnam, eds. (London ; New York: Zed Books 2011); R. Paris, “Critiques of liberal peace” in *A liberal peace? The problems and practices of peacebuilding*, S. Campbell, D. Chandler and M. Sabaratnam, eds. (London ; New York: Zed Books 2011).

²¹ N. Chomsky, *The new military humanism : lessons from Kosovo*, London: Pluto Press: 1999; M. Duffield, *Global governance and the new wars: the merging of development and security*, London: Zed Books: 2001.

²² D. Chandler, *Empire in denial : the politics of state-building*, London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto: 2006.

²³ W. Bain, “In praise of folly: international administration and the corruption of humanity”, *International Affairs*, 82: 3, 2006.

²⁴ R. H. Jackson, *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press 2000.

The growing significance of statebuilding policies reflects the heightened attention paid to the problem of state ‘fragility’, now classified as the ‘indispensable element of the international lexicon’ and itself subjected to in-depth studies.²⁵

A cursory glance at statebuilding and fragility-related policy documents reveals that international community is a recurrent phrase and, while analyses of statebuilding practice abound, scholarly literature has not addressed the fact that the idea of international community and international statebuilding policies are inseparable.²⁶ International community, while it might at first be simply a useful catchphrase in the hands of speechwriters, has taken on a life of its own. Policy implementation circles and significant parts of the academia converged at regarding statebuilding as *the imperative* for international community.

Actors undertaking international statebuilding implicitly claim the right to do both: define the international as international community and act in the name of that international community. This policy discourse reveals and reifies a particular vision of the international. First of all, there has to be a conception of the whole to be able to assert that a part does not fit and needs fixing before it destabilizes the imagined totality. The reification of some sort of international construct, which is valuable and orderly but susceptible to shocks, must take place. Discursive uses of the notion of international community made it into an element of ‘communal’ imagining and the enabling condition for statebuilding to take place. International community became a framework enabling categorization, a context in which some states are characterized by their deficiencies and without which legitimization of international statebuilding policies becomes difficult. Moreover, international community gained agential features. Those who act under international community banner claim the right to judge particular states as quasi, weak or fragile and take upon themselves the task of helping these states become ‘normal’.

Imagining the world and its states

The characteristic feature of international community discourse is that the term is dispersed. It would be difficult to come across a document in the area of development cooperation that would stop short of employing it, yet rarely does it get explained or engaged with in a more comprehensive way. A number of practitioners interviewed for this thesis admitted that the concept is in wide use but there is little reflection on its meaning, significance or the message it

²⁵ D. Carment, S. Prest, and Y. Samy, *Security, development, and the fragile state: bridging the gap between theory and policy*, London: Routledge: 2010.; S. Harman and D. Williams, “International development in transition”, *International Affairs*, 90: 4, 2014.; N. Robinson, “State-building and international politics. The emergence of a ‘new’ problem and agenda”, in *State-building: theory and practice*, ed. A. Hehir and N. Robinson (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007).

²⁶ Statebuilding has become an important concern for scholarly analysis. B. Brast, “A Sociological Turn in Statebuilding Research?”, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7: 4, 2013: 531; R. Egnell and P. Haldén, “Introduction: the need for new agendas in statebuilding”, in *New agendas in statebuilding: hybridity, contingency and history*, ed. R. Egnell and P. Haldén (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

conveys: ‘We operate with this term a lot in the UN but maybe it is the first time I am actually thinking what international community is.’²⁷

Non-Western states such as China or Russia only rarely get mentioned as members of international community, which is most probably the result of the almost automatic linking of this community to a particular set of liberal values. International community members are usually associated with ‘good citizens’ of international society who are like-minded in the promotion of human rights.²⁸

The document taken to be the foundation of all development and statebuilding activities is the UN Millennium Declaration. Contrary to what might be expected, the declaration does not equate international community with the United Nations. The document presents international community as a separate being, something out there to which one can pledge, which can be motivated or urged to take action. Quite against expectations, the phrase international community is not overused. It is invoked only once in the entire document and with regard to a specific issue of small island states.²⁹ The rich discourse produced by states and organisations engaged in development cooperation, however, uses the term international community as though international community were the Millennium Declaration’s principal author. For instance, UNDP, one of the most important UN aid agencies, states: ‘This issue is studied in the context of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have been approved by the international community, and which call for poverty reduction’.³⁰

On the basis of the Millennium Declaration, the policy world established eight targets, the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which provide the key guidance in various development cooperation activities.³¹ These goals range from halving extreme poverty to securing universal primary education. What critical discourse analysis makes us reconsider, however, is not necessarily the content of these goals but the assumption behind MDGs. Positing that one may set global millennial targets is yet another illustration of how the world is imagined as a community which can work towards the achievement of these goals by a specific date (2015).

World Development Reports (WDRs), an influential annual publication produced by the World Bank on the subject of economic development, is another source of discourse with a profound impact on policies of development and statebuilding. The very title of the series – *World Development Report* – is significant from a discourse analysis perspective as it reveals the

²⁷ Interview, senior official at UN Kyrgyzstan, December 2014.

²⁸ Interview, senior official at Swiss Aid, Kyrgyzstan, October 2014.

²⁹ ‘We urge the international community to ensure that, in the development of a vulnerability index, the special needs of small island developing States are taken into account.’ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, 8 September 2000.

³⁰ UNDP, *Millennium Development Goals in Russia: Looking into the Future*, Moscow, 2010.

³¹ The UN describes for the eight Millennium Development Goals as: ‘a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions’ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (last accessed 8 February 2014).

pretence of the document's authors. The title informs that publication is reporting development in the world. It is thus implicit that there is *a world* that *develops*; the process is amenable to knowing and lends itself to be reported on. Such a picture of the world's development can be compiled by a bank, which has a name no other than the *World Bank*. It is a clear discursive expression of power to name what the world is, to place it on a developmental trajectory and to take upon oneself to describe this trajectory selecting its most important aspects to be reported yearly.

Two particular editions – the 1997 and 2011 WDRs – merit closer consideration. The 1997 document is regarded a paradigm shifter in international statebuilding, whereas the 2011 version makes some very explicit claims regarding the international realm. The 1997 imprint is devoted to the role and effectiveness of the state. By its title alone, *The state in a changing world*, it heralded significant changes in how the World Bank perceived the role of the state in development. At the same time, the 1997 report constitutes a perfect illustration of the discursive construction of the international and the embedding of the state within this overarching frame.

The 1997 report presents development as an explicit and dominant value for the world and subordinates the state to its service. The major contours of this image of the world are defined by globalization, economic integration and the spread of democracy. The report redefines the state's responsibilities focusing them around 'facilitating' world development. Among fundamental tasks for the state are: establishing a foundation of law, maintaining an adequate policy environment, investing in basic social services and infrastructure and protecting the environment.³² All these derive from and at the same time uphold a certain vision of the international, one that is composed of well-governed states.

A particular vision of the international becomes even more explicit in the report's discussion of international collective action. The goal of such action is to provide 'international public goods' and to prevent fragmentation of the 'community of nations'.³³ Such a framing is embedded in the conceptualization of the international in terms of a community linked by certain values and composed of specifically organised states whose governments perform well-defined functions. In order to maintain the community it becomes indispensable to 'measure the state' and its capabilities.³⁴ As a result, in addition to the presumed existence of a community of states, the report also relies on and constructs a purportedly universal reference point against which states can be assessed. Those who do not fit should undertake the necessary transformation and readjustment.

³² World Bank, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*, New York: Oxford University Press: 1997, 12.

³³ World Bank, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*, New York: Oxford University Press: 1997, 132.

³⁴ World Bank, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*, 34.

This logic embeds the state in a particular vision of the international and presents weak states as unable to participate in ‘global collective action’.³⁵ This image of the international receives a very tangible form in WDR 2011:

Regional institutions can bridge the distance between *universal norms* and local customs. Those customs or practices must conform, in substance, to the *core international principles from which the international community derives its cohesion*. Otherwise cultural diversity can simply override, and undermine, the *international framework*.³⁶

Fragility or state weakness as major threats to the imagined community is a narrative present in a wide variety of policy documents and with various degrees of ‘linguistic’ political correctness. The more explicit rhetoric states plainly:

Least developed countries (LDCs) are considered to be the “*poorest and weakest segment*” within the international community, as their level of development substantially trails other categories of countries, and they have failed to emerge from poverty.³⁷

Fragile situations constitute a particular challenge as an *obstacle* to sustainable development, equitable growth and peace, creating regional instability, security risks at global level, uncontrolled migration flows, etc. (...) The *international community is increasingly concerned* about the consequences of fragility, which exacerbate the challenge of reaching the Millennium Development Goals, harm people’s wellbeing and freedoms and may involve *global security risks*.³⁸

Indeed, the very starting point for international statebuilding policies is the assumption that a part (i.e. a weak state) does not fit some sort of imagined whole and as such threatens the stability of this whole. What has not been fully realised and discussed in literature devoted to international statebuilding is that only the idea of the whole allows for depicting certain parts as not fitting, fragile, weak and threatening. Viewing the world in terms of a community of states allows for the identification of state ‘fragility’ as a problem. The next step is knowledge production about that problem, a thorough exposition of the components of the right model and devising policies aimed at bringing this model into life in different parts of the world. The accompanying assumption is

³⁵ World Bank, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*, 12.

³⁶ World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, New York: Oxford University Press: 2011, 39.

³⁷ *Partners in Development. How Donors Can Better Engage the Private Sector for Development in LDCs*, UN Global Compact, UNDP, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2011, http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/development/Partners_in_Development.pdf.

³⁸ *Towards an EU response to situations of fragility – engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace*. Communication From The Commission To The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions, Brussels, 25.10.2007 COM(2007) 643 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0643:FIN:EN:PDF>.

that one can ‘deal with’ states and thereby resolve problems crucial for global security, understood as stability of international community.³⁹

The objectification of state weakness remains a crucial element of this approach. States become the object of statebuilding, they are analysed and meant to be cured. States are labelled as ‘in transition’, which stipulates there is a goal for them to reach. Some of them are expected to ‘catch up’, to ‘converge’, particularly if they are ‘stuck’ or fail to ‘match the standards’ of more advanced economies. One simply needs to tackle their weakness problem.

The manners of international courtesy do not extend far enough to prevent states’ classification and naming. Ranking states is the order of the day and derogative language is omnipresent. The introduction of the word ‘partner’ has done little in terms of altering the prevalent vocabulary or masking power relations underpinning policies of statebuilding. A simple textual analysis reveals that donors describe their relations with ‘partners’ using words with positive connotations such as: cooperate, engage, secure, improve, enable, maximize, philanthropic, collaborative. All these contrast starkly with vocabulary describing the ‘recipient’ state as the least developed, poorest, weakest, failing and vulnerable. A state becomes an object to be judged, classified and ameliorated. Denigration seems justified if the intention is to ‘help’ and if the driving force of this process is development or statebuilding. It is far from a new observation that rendering others inferior is the chief source of power but ostracizing becomes particularly dangerous if it pretends not to be political. Since there are certain standards and structural requirements to be met, failure to do so results in lesser international standing and is an obvious symptom of a state’s need for help. A decision to undertake international statebuilding policies becomes a technical issue. This framing depoliticizes the state as well as statebuilding. It is no longer possible or straightforward to recognise statebuilding as an intervention and one that takes place on an everyday basis.

In defining what a fragile state is, mathematical and biological metaphors permeate discourse. Different institutions produce classifications and rankings, which are to help determine the level of state’s *fitness*. The USAID, a U.S. government agency working in the area of development cooperation, defines fragility as the ‘extent to which state-society relations fail to *produce outcomes* considered effective and legitimate, with effectiveness and legitimacy being equal parts of the *equation*’.⁴⁰

³⁹ This logic is not uncommon in scholarly literature: R. Caplan, *International governance of war-torn territories: rule and reconstruction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005; Chesterman, *You, the people: the United Nations, transitional administration, and state-building*; S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff, and R. C. Thakur, *Making states work: state failure and the crisis of governance*, Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press: 2005.

⁴⁰ Nancy Lindborg, ‘To End Extreme Poverty, Tackle Fragility’, *USAID blog*, 13 February 2014, <http://blog.usaid.gov/2014/02/to-end-extreme-poverty-tackle-fragility/> (last accessed 4 August 2014). In this particular definition, the USAID stops short of defining what effective or legitimate means or indicating how these could be measured.

The reliance on mathematical abstraction, widespread use of statistical data and indices dominate. They are believed to allow for making informed decisions based on aggregated data. The measures of statehood include: Fragile States Index, Democracy Index or ‘Freedom in the world’.⁴¹ The 2015 Fragile States Index, an annual ranking of 177 countries across 12 indicators, classified Kyrgyzstan under the label ‘high warning’. The state reached 62nd place (the greater the number the stronger the state).⁴² The 2014 Democracy Index, covering 167 countries, placed Kyrgyzstan in the 95th position (the greater the number, the less democratic the state).⁴³

The Kyrgyz Republic *measured by The Economist* in 2015:

Electoral process and pluralism	6.58/10
Functioning of government	3.29/10
Political participation	6.67/10
Political culture	4.38/10
Civil liberties	5.29/10

The Kyrgyz Republic *measured by the Freedom House* in 2014:

Electoral Process	6/12
Political Pluralism and Participation	6/16
Functioning of Government	4/12
Freedom of Expression and Belief	9/16
Associational and Organizational Rights	4/12
Rule of Law	4/16
Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights	7/16

Criteria employed by these rankings provide an illustration of components of the ‘right’ kind of state. The model encompasses: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, freedom

⁴¹ Fragile State Index is compiled by the Fund for Peace, a non-profit research and educational organization funded partly by the American government. Democracy Index is compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit and measures the state of democracy in 167 countries. ‘Freedom in the world’ is produced by the US-based Freedom House and it is often taken to be a measure of democracy. For a critique of measuring fragility see e.g. Wim Naudé, Amelia U. Santos-Paulino and Mark McGillivray (eds.), *Fragile States: Causes, Costs, and Responses*, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 34-37.

⁴² Retrieved from: <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/> (last accessed 5 July 2015).

⁴³ Retrieved from:

http://www.eiu.com/public/thankyou_download.aspx?activity=download&campaignid=Democracy0115 (last accessed 5 July 2015).

of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, functioning of government, political culture, civil liberties and individual rights.

The ‘New Deal’ for state-building, agreed among donor states in 2011, follows the measurement trend very closely:

By September 2012, a set of indicators for each goal will have been developed by fragile states and international partners, which will allow us to track progress closely at the global and country levels. These will allow us to measure objectively, as well as gauging people’s views on the results achieved.⁴⁴

This process of assessment and ranking has become ubiquitous. For instance, the US evaluates Kyrgyzstan in terms of: human rights,⁴⁵ religious freedom,⁴⁶ trafficking in persons⁴⁷ and drug trafficking.⁴⁸

The discourse makes frequent recourses to the Millennium Development Goals and the annually published *Progress Report* on the achievement of these Goals. For instance, the Asian Development Bank states:

The 2011 Millennium Development Goal progress report found that the Kyrgyz Republic had reached *benchmarks* for several *indicators*, including the reduction of extreme poverty, which fell rapidly up to 2008. But it is likely to fall short of *targets* on maternal and child mortality; gender equality; combating HIV/AIDS; and improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation.⁴⁹

There is an implicit assumption that states in the modern world need to be ‘manageable’. The classificatory language is used side by side with highly rationalised discourse that makes frequent recourses to expertise and research. The World Bank presents its role as ‘one of the world’s largest sources of funding and *knowledge* for transition and developing countries’.⁵⁰ The Asian Development Bank, ADB, states that: ‘sectors and themes [of ADB’s] assistance programme are selected based on the results of diagnostic studies’.⁵¹ The European Union declares its ‘readiness

⁴⁴ *New Deal. Building Peaceful States*, <http://www.newdeal4peace.org/peacebuilding-and-statebuilding-goals/>.

⁴⁵ *Kyrgyz Republic 2012 Human Rights Report*, US Department of State, http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepulic/325898/turganbaevaa/HR2012report_Kyrgyzstan.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁴⁶ *Kyrgyz Republic 2012 International Religious Freedom Report*, US Department of State, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepulic/325898/turganbaevaa/KyrgyzRepublic2012InternationalReligiousFreedomReport.pdf> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁴⁷ *Trafficking in persons report 2013*, US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁴⁸ *2008 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, US Department of State, http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/W6qzW0z2gzzjjhnJ0PoYg/2008_International_Narcotics_Control_Strategy_Report.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁴⁹ *2013-2017 Country Partnership Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic*, The Asian Development Bank, p.2 http://donors.kg/images/docs/reports_and_studies/cps-kgz-2013-2017_en.pdf (last accessed 8 August 2014).

⁵⁰ http://www.donors.kg/en/agencies/107-wb#.U8oND_mSw30 (last accessed 15 July 2014)

⁵¹ *2013-2017 Country Partnership Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic*, The Asian Development Bank, http://donors.kg/images/docs/reports_and_studies/cps-kgz-2013-2017_en.pdf (last accessed 8 August 2014).

to share its *expertise*’ concerning democratic reforms.⁵² The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development claims: ‘This year’s Transition Report *explains why* some countries may be ‘stuck’ in traps with little or no reform’.⁵³ Many other donors underline the role of knowledge related to transition: ‘*Expertise* and advice are being shared about how to develop accurate economic analyses and forecasts, and support is being provided to strengthen the budgeting and auditing processes’.⁵⁴

Country specific knowledge production and dissemination, in the form of country analyses or country backgrounds, usually accompanies policy plans. For example a *Country analysis* constitutes one of the annexes to the *European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia* for the period 2007-2013. A *Country Background* is the first part of the 2013-2017 *Country Partnership Strategy* for the Kyrgyz Republic.⁵⁵ The US Department of State compiles annual *Human Rights Report* on Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁶

Ranking and knowledge are usually accompanied by the rhetoric of progress.⁵⁷ Development, transition, movement forward, are all connected to the overarching notion of progress that defines and guides international community and is expected to materialise in a state. It would be difficult to come up with a more progressive slogan than the one placed on a billboard advertising a donor-sponsored youth event in Bishkek: ‘Moving development forward’.⁵⁸ The 2013 High Level Development Conference participants were equally creative when they agreed that the goal for Kyrgyzstan is not only transition or development but both, ingenuously amalgamated into: ‘transition to a long-term development’.⁵⁹ An oft repeated policy conclusion is that: ‘much remains to be done, but progress is visible’⁶⁰; or ‘Kyrgyzstan is a young democracy and has made

⁵² STATEMENT by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Brussels, 17 September 2013, 130917/04, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/130917_04_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁵³ *Transition Report 2013: Stuck In Transition*, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

⁵⁴ http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/centralasia/en/Home/Activities_in_Kyrgyzstan/PUBLIC_SECTOR_REFORMS_AND_INFRA_STRUCTURE (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁵⁵ *2013-2017 Country Partnership Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic*, The Asian Development Bank, http://donors.kg/images/docs/reports_and_studies/cps-kgz-2013-2017_en.pdf (last accessed 8 August 2014).

⁵⁶ *Kyrgyz Republic 2012 Human Rights Report*, US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204614.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Also this element shows signs of tautology: international community has a purpose that justifies its existence but it is the same time the main discursive creator of this purpose. The way various donors represent affairs in developing states makes it indispensable for them to act.

⁵⁸ An English- and Kyrgyz-language billboard slogan advertising an internationally-sponsored youth event, seen in Bishkek 08.2013.

⁵⁹ The conference was organized in the vicinities of Bishkek, 10-11 July 2013. The oversight of the Conference was the responsibility of the Consultative Council, a standing body established in August 2012 and co-chaired by the Prime Minister and representatives of ‘Development Partners’, a grouping of donors active in Kyrgyzstan. http://www.donors.kg/upload/docs/reports_and_studies/Joint%20Declaration.pdf

⁶⁰ *Ambassador Pamela L. Spratlen's Remarks at the High-Level Development Conference*, Bishkek, 10 July 2013, <http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/ambassador-pamela-spratlen-remarks-at-the-high-level-development-conference-july-10-2013.html>

much progress in a very short period of time. All of the leaders with whom I met today expressed their desire to make more progress'.⁶¹

The progress rhetoric accompanying the 'production' of a right kind of a state is permeated with goal setting and planning. The obsession with planning (including strategies, action plans and roadmaps) leads to *curiosa* that are barely comprehensible:

Based on the results of the discussion, the working group developed *plan* of next actions on basin *planning* for the Isfara river, in particular, on prioritization of the problems in the basin, which later is to be included into basin *plan*.⁶²

The EU welcomed Kazakhstan's *plan* for the development of a new National Human Rights Action *Plan*, and agreed to consider how it might support the development of that *plan*.⁶³

Since progress in a particular direction is considered to be only natural for a state and granting assistance in this process is a positive undertaking, one of specific functions of international community discourse is that it naturalises forms of political practice geared towards the creation of such a state, i.e. practices of standard setting and statebuilding.

The right kind of state: models and standards

Classification – what states are – goes hand in hand with establishing models and standards – how states should be. Viewing and presenting the international in a particular way facilitates the promotion of a particular state model. It is used as shorthand for a higher instance able to pass *objective* judgements on values deemed universal, as illustrated by the following quotation:

The abolition of child labour has been an important legislative step taken in Turkmenistan although it will be difficult for the international community to *form an objective view* on its implementation.⁶⁴

While it may not be legitimate for the US, France, the UK or any other single Western state to set standards for any particular non-Western state, it becomes perfectly natural for international community to do so. There is nothing objective about a particular standard but it becomes legitimized when it is presented as a building block of international community.

Democratic institutions supported by rule of law are the major component of the right kind of state. USAID goals for Kyrgyzstan are defined as: 'governing democratically and justly by

⁶¹ *Press Availability With Kyrgyz Republic Media*, Bishkek, 30 November 2012, <http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/tr12-5-12.html> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶² *EU project supported meeting of the working group on basin planning in the Isfara river basin*, Press release, 26 July 2013, http://waterca.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/07/2013-07-15_PR_Expert_workshop_Basin_Planning_Khujand_TJ_WMBOCA_ENG.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶³ *EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue*, Astana, 27 November 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131127_01_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶⁴ EU, *European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, Brussels, 2007.

strengthening parliament and local governance as well as civil society and media'. USAID aspires to 'promote stability, decrease the chances of unrest, and facilitate efforts to restore core government functions'.⁶⁵ Following the 2010 revolution, the Office of Transition Initiatives of the USAID embarked upon a new programme, the goal of which was to provide 'targeted assistance' supporting 'the on-going democratic political transition'.⁶⁶

Kyrgyzstan is not only to fulfil the standards, but also to serve as a 'model for the region'.⁶⁷ The joint British-American initiative, the *Deepening Democracy Programme*, aspires to 'increase the effectiveness, and responsiveness of the Kyrgyz Parliament'.⁶⁸ The then EU High Representative Catherine Ashton stressed that the European Union pays the bulk of its attention to democratic reforms and free and fair elections.⁶⁹ The document of the European External Action Service (EEAS) put this goal into the framework of partnership and cooperation.⁷⁰

The goals of the World Bank in Kyrgyzstan are to 'improve governance and fight corruption, to maintain efficient and stable public finances, and to strengthen social stability'.⁷¹ The Asian Development Bank *Country Partnership Strategy* for the Kyrgyz Republic identifies several major deficiencies of the Kyrgyz state: 'political instability, weak rule of law, and corruption'. The document then sets the task of 'reforming legal and regulatory frameworks to improve the business environment, expand access to affordable finance across the country (...)'.⁷² The aim of the Swiss Regional Strategy in Central Asia is to assist in 'the transition process in Kyrgyzstan [...] from authoritarian rule and central planning to pluralism and market economy'.⁷³

⁶⁵ http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/embassy_sections.html (last accessed 15 July 2014). The goals are specified by the Office of Transition Initiatives of the USAID, https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=c557428cc165a6fa99b7b261696ab98f&tab=core&_cview=0 (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶⁶ <http://www.usaid.gov/political-transition-initiatives/kyrgyz-republic> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶⁷ http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/090613_Kyrgyz-Republic_CLEARED.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014)

⁶⁸ *Senior Kyrgyz Parliamentary Delegation visits UK*, 2 September 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/the-delegation-of-kyrgyz-parliament-members-will-visit-uk> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁶⁹ STATEMENT by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Brussels, 17 September 2013 130917/04, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/130917_04_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁷⁰ 'The EU bilateral assistance to Kyrgyzstan for the period 2007-2013 is focused in the sectors of education, social protection, agriculture and rural development, conflict mitigation and good governance [...] the EU and the EU Member States are ready to continue to support Kyrgyzstan's efforts in consolidating its democracy and in advancing and modernizing its social and economic development; the partnership and cooperation between the EU and its Member-States and Kyrgyzstan is based on common values and principles; the EU development assistance works and is transparent and this aid helps to bring about long term development that leads to dynamic, prospering and stable democratic society'. http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/documents/press_corner/news2013/pr_infomtg_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁷¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/people/alex-kremer> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁷² *2013-2017 Country Partnership Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic*, The Asian Development Bank, http://donors.kg/images/docs/reports_and_studies/cps-kgz-2013-2017_en.pdf (last accessed 8 August 2014).

⁷³ *Swiss Regional Strategy in Central Asia 2012-2015*, http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/centralasia/en/Home/Regional_Strategy; <http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/centralasia/en/Home> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

Models and standards do not only play a role in defining the desired state model with more precision. Crucially, the way standards are presented contributes to constructing the idea of the international. The causal arrow works both ways. Standards build or reinforce the image of international community as one that upholds specific values. Apart from the stress on democracy found in various policy documents, there are more direct references to international community values. The US State Department annual Human Rights Report, for instance, indicated that the judicial procedures implemented following the 2010 riots in Kyrgyzstan did not meet ‘international standards of *fairness*’.⁷⁴

The list of standards that Kyrgyzstan is expected to meet encompasses politics, trade, finance, banking, labour, aviation and even mountain guiding and lifestyle. Their range and framing merits a more extended illustration:

We shall collectively endeavour to protect and promote the realisation of human rights, gender equality and the rule of law for all. *The judicial reform in line with international standards* remains an important priority for the consolidation of the rule of law.⁷⁵

Since 2000, EXBS has delivered over 24 million dollars in training and equipment in support of the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts in border security, non-proliferation, and the establishment of strategic *trade controls that meet international standards*.⁷⁶

Customs procedures are being assessed, as is the conversion from the old GOST structure (Gossudarstvenny Standart – government standard for Russia and the CIS countries) to a high-quality *infrastructure based on modern, international standards* (ISO – International Organization for Standardization).⁷⁷

Participants were presented with guidance about the legal basis, operational framework, education, logistical needs and investigation techniques necessary for *upgrading bilateral co-operation to international standards*.⁷⁸

[Participants] learned about best practices and *international standards in the delimitation and demarcation* of a border line.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013, Secretary's Preface, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁷⁵ Joint Declaration by the Development Partners of the Kyrgyz Republic at the close of the High Level Development Conference, 11 July 2013, Bishkek, p. 3,

http://www.donors.kg/images/docs/reports_and_studies/Joint_Declaration_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁷⁶ http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/embassy_sections.html

⁷⁷ <http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/14062.html>

⁷⁸ OSCE organizes study visit of Tajik, Kyrgyz experts to Estonia on border delimitation and demarcation, Dushanbe, 23 July 2014, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/121635>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Since 22 April 2002, *International Standards of Audit* issued in 2001 by the International Auditing Practices Committee of the International Federation of Accountants are approved as the audit standards of the Kyrgyz Republic.⁸⁰

The project will promote the observance of *international labour standards*⁸¹

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) representation in Kyrgyzstan sponsored an exhibition entitled *Design and modern life based on Japanese experience*. The exhibition's folder informs: 'Construction boom promoted production of interior items and activated entrepreneurs interested in creation of a *lifestyle meeting international standards*.'⁸²

In parallel with the presentation of particular states as weak, in need of adjustments and implementation of *international standards*, the assumption of the imperative to help develops. Specific actors *take upon themselves* the task of building other states. This, in turn, allows them to construct themselves as representatives of international community. The discourse of international community is thus not limited to producing the idea of the whole. It also constructs and reproduces agential international community.

Agential international community

The narrative of a 'weak state' is important for the construction of agential 'international community'. A significant part of statebuilding discourse equates international community only with a particular group of states, usually termed 'donors'. This group consists of highly developed states and includes various inter- and nongovernmental bodies financed by these states. The donor-focused understanding of international community is reproduced in a number of ways in written documents⁸³ but it is also shared commonly by practitioners working in the area of statebuilding.⁸⁴

Several features of and values accorded to agential international community can be read out of policy discourse.⁸⁵ Texts usually convey the message that 'something needs to be done' or that action is immediately required. Since it is not only appropriate and responsible but mandatory to take action, the agential international community is presented as ready and willing to help.

⁸⁰ The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Audit" <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=4921> (last accessed 15 December 2014).

⁸¹ <http://centralasia.usaid.gov/kyrgyzstan/849> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁸² http://www.jica.go.jp/kyrgyz/english/office/others/pdf/pressrelease_20081023_en.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁸³ 'the government was in discussions with various parts of the international community—diplomatic, peacekeeping, and development—on pressing institutional transformations'. World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, 110; 'the international community, encompassing both the neighbouring countries, and bilateral and multilateral partners'. UNDP, "Central Asia Human Development Report 2005. Bringing down barriers: Regional cooperation for human development and human security," (Bratislava: UNDP Regional Bureau, 2005), 3.

⁸⁴ Interviews with employees of: the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation, (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ), UNDP, Swiss Aid, September-October 2014, Bishkek.

⁸⁵ This analysis is based on research interviews conducted with senior officials of aid agencies with presence in Bishkek and Dushanbe, December 2012 and September-December 2013.

Activities it undertakes are for a good cause, which makes this international community an intrinsically positive *entity*.

International community acts in defence or in the name of laudable values. 'In the service of democracy, peace and development' is the Hanns Seidel Foundation's motto, which the foundation applies to its work abroad.⁸⁶ 'Happiness for all', the motto of KOICA, the South Korean aid agency, is accompanied with commendable slogans, such as 'Making a better world together'.⁸⁷ In addition to direct messages, the concept of international community is usually used with affirmative nouns, such as peace, affirmative active verbs, such as peacebuilding, which all construct international community as a helpful entity worthy of trust. Commonplace usage of words such as partner, commitment and cooperation present international community as highly engaged and caring:

We strongly believe that *working together* with other donors is key for the success of the New Deal in order to reduce the burden on our *partner countries*. We would like to invite all donors to *partner* us in building staff skills *jointly*, holding training, and *team* building so as to be more effective and coordinated in *supporting the partner* country's efforts. At the same time, EU is looking forward to contributing to developing a post-2015 framework with the objective of *ensuring a decent life for all* – ending the poverty and *giving the world a sustainable future*, as spelled out in the recent Communication of the European Commission.⁸⁸

Partner governments also need to ensure coherence between ministries in the priorities they convey to the international community.⁸⁹

International donors have *volunteered to help* Central Asian businessmen, offering to introduce the concept of Japanese management called Kaizen. Kaizen is derived from the Japanese word for *good change* and is mostly known as a form of management that focuses on *continuous improvement*.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ The Mission of the Hanns Seidel Foundation <http://www.hss.de/english.html> (last accessed 13 August 2013). The Hanns Seidel Foundation is a German political foundation associated with the Christian Social Union (CSU) which stated aim is the provision of political education. The Foundation's regional project in Central Asia supports state administration academies in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan http://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Publikationen/IIZ-Flyer_V-2_Osteuropa_100x210_mm_4c_ENGLISCH-L4_Web.pdf (last accessed 13 August 2013).

⁸⁷ Korea International Cooperation Agency, KOICA official webpage <http://www.koica.go.kr/english/main.html> (last accessed 20 May 2014); KOICA 2012 leaflet http://www.koica.go.kr/download/leaflet2012_eng.pdf (last accessed 20 May 2014).

⁸⁸ Statement by Commissioner Piebalgs for the Third Ministerial Meeting of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 19 April 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/speech-new-deal-international-dialogue-peacebuilding-statebuilding-piebalgs-20130419_en_5.pdf.

⁸⁹ *Principles for good international engagement in fragile states & situations*, OECD, p. 2 <http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38368714.pdf> (last accessed 15 July 2014).

⁹⁰ Interview, senior aid agency official, Bishkek, October 2013.

International community as the representation of a global whole and agential international community are interwoven. As a representation of the international, international community is valuable and worth preserving. It encompasses the notion of global security and prosperity. Agential international community, in turn, is indispensable for preserving universal international community. Conversely, universal international community depends on positive action taken by agential international community.

Conclusions: the embodiment of the idea of international community

This chapter illustrated how specific forms of the international community discourse are enmeshed with statebuilding policies aimed at constructing a state according to specific standards. Even though the international community is just an idea, it structures the way things are done in contemporary international politics. This specific representation of the international shapes expectations with regard to the state and legitimizes intervention aimed at adjusting certain polities to the expected model. The right kind of state should fulfil a set of criteria which make it into a fully-fledged member of international community. The state model is supported with reference to the allegedly objective *knowledge*. State rankings – and by extension the discourse of states' weakness – are produced with the help of mathematics. Such rankings are the major point of reference for policies aimed at *helping* states reach a certain level of *stateness* and meet specific standards. There is, however, nothing objective about a particular standard.

Practitioners discourse on the one hand reifies international community presenting it as a fact of international politics, the adequate and objective reflection of the world out there. On the other hand, part of statebuilding discourse equates international community only with a particular group of states, usually termed 'donors'. This allows for presenting activities of statebuilding as intrinsically good and actors undertaking them as those working for the benefit of all. Despite the fact that the idea of international community relies on and reinforces classifications, such as that there are two types of states, those developed and those developing, international community is valued as virtuous and statebuilding as necessary and unquestionably ameliorative. The most paradoxical aspect is that aid activities are not necessarily focused exclusively on states such as Kyrgyzstan. They are, in fact, directed at the idea of international community. Quasi-states are important for agential international community since they allow this community to pursue goals and undertake concrete activities (those of statebuilding) which it can automatically present as 'doing something' and 'doing good'.

What emerges out of this analysis is a suggestion that international actors need the embodiment of the idea of the international community. The notion of international community

gives purpose, becomes the tangible goal and the result of cooperation. It allows for maintaining actors' identity and the perception of themselves as co-operating, caring and responsible. The enlightened project of helping those in need keeps them engaged. Statebuilding thus becomes an exercise in *bonding* between highly developed states, just as much as it is an activity of *helping* 'fragile' states. It becomes the *raison d'être* of agential international community and is predicated upon its image of a purposive entity, acting for the benefit of the imagined international community.

CHAPTER 4 Russia: a different vision of the international

Introduction

This chapter proceeds from the assumption that a closer look at Russia's view of the world facilitates a more critical approach to representations of the international developed by the English School. The broader aim is to challenge the reified and purportedly objective nature of international society as well as to denaturalise the discourse of international society. The constructions of the international produced in Russia are not only particularly useful in denaturalising the discourse of international society, they also illustrate how a vision of the world is embedded in and conditioned by historical and social processes.

This chapter's exploration of the Russian portrayal of the international realm is organised around two questions: what kind of representation of the international can be said to have emerged as significant in contemporary Russian discourse and what conditioned its production. The discussion opens with a short review of literature which analyses Russia from international society perspective. This section helps to illustrate the disjuncture between the international society-inspired interpretation of Russia's place in the world and the way the international is represented in Russia.¹ The chapter proceeds to outlining sources that have contributed to the construction of the international in Russia and analyses the components of the Russian World (*Russkii mir*) narrative, a *sui generis* culmination of several currents influencing the thinking about the international in Russia. Subsequently Chapter Five will explore ways in which representations of the international pursued in Russia influence concepts and policies implemented with regard to a state.

In Western IR literature there is very little discussion of how Russia imagines and represents the world. There appears to be little interest among Western scholars in what 'the international' means for Russia. In addition, ideas stemming from Russia are too readily dismissed as either insincere (that is, these ideas are regarded as no more than propaganda and political posturing) or, if they are considered genuinely-held, then as irrational and bypassing 'reality'. No due attention is paid to the fact that these ideas, just as is the case with international society/international community, may play important roles in shaping Russia's policy actions.

There are two caveats in need of explaining at the outset. Firstly, there are multiple voices in the Russian debate on the international. This chapter does not claim to be exposing its essence, but merely attempts to outline recent directions in the thinking about international politics. It ponders meanings and values attached to terms used in order to describe the international realm. Some of these terms have long genealogies, some are entirely new creations, while others may be borrowed

¹ The review is focused on but not limited to scholars identified with or sympathetic to the English School. Since a clear demarcation of the English School is difficult to make and area studies scholars started engaging with the idea of international society, it is important to provide a broader overview.

from the West and, through the process of transmission and translation, acquire different meaning. As will be explained, certain contemporary ideas have a long pedigree and bring to fruition or simply provide a coherent rhetorical structure to notions circulating in Russian political thought for many decades.

Secondly, the chapter refrains from situating or analysing Russia's approach to international politics with the use of classificatory frameworks and images constructed in Western IR scholarship. The aim is to analyse the Russian view of the international on its own terms, paying attention to concerns voiced and questions asked by Russian international relations thinkers and surfacing as part of policy discourse.² Since a clear separation between scholarly and policy discourses is difficult to make, to the extent that some scholars see them as mutually constitutive, the chapter discusses them in conjunction.³

The world eyes Russia or *Oni o nas*⁴

The classical English School position assumed that Russia had become westernised and that this westernisation enabled Russia to join European international society and to play a part in its expansion towards Asia.⁵ Contrary to an argument put forward by several Russian and Western scholars, e.g. Madina Tlostanova or Martin Malia,⁶ that Western Europe never regarded the Russian empire as its equal, the English School placed Russia either inside its understanding of European borders or compared it on equal terms with other European powers. The tsarist empire was interpreted as an outpost of European international society. Contributors to *The Expansion of International Society* discuss the role of the competing powers of Russia and Britain in Asia in conjunction rather than in opposition:

On the whole, *the British and the Russians* do not seem to have treated Asian states with any more impatience and violence than that experienced by smaller European countries in time of conflict with more powerful neighbours.⁷

² A 'Russian view' is a problematic but necessary simplification I resort to in this thesis. What is meant by the phrase are elements I identified as prevailing in scholarly and policy discourses I collected from sources identified in Chapter One.

³ A. Makarychev and V. Morozov, "Is 'Non-Western Theory' Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR", *International Studies Review*, 15: 3, 2013: 330.

⁴ *Oni o nas* (they about us) is a title borrowed from *Izvestiya*, a popular Russian daily newspaper, which in the section *They about us* publishes a selection of translated articles on Russian politics appearing in the Western press.

⁵ Watson, "Russia and the European States System", 61. Already in 1984, the *Foreign Affairs* review of Bull and Watson's *The Expansion of international society* assessed it as 'Western in outlook', with no profound discussion of the 'Third' or 'Communist' worlds. *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1984/85, review by John C. Campbell.

⁶ M. Tlostanova, *Towards a Decolonization of Thinking and Knowledge: a Few Reflections from the World of Imperial Difference*, http://antville.org/static/m1/files/madina_tlostanova_decolonisation_thinking.pdf; M. E. Malia, *Russia under western eyes: from the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press: 1999.

⁷ D. Gillard, "British and Russian relations with Asian governments in the nineteenth century", in *The Expansion of international society*, ed. H. Bull and A. Watson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 90.

Hedley Bull reiterated this view: 'Like the maritime expansion of the Western European states, the expansion of Russia by land proceeded by the subjugation of indigenous communities and immigration and settlement by metropolitan peoples'.⁸

While in the eighteenth century Russia was seen as joining the ranks of Europe's great powers, in the course of the nineteenth century it began to fall behind its European counterparts. Doubts were raised over Russia's place in European international society. Russia itself felt vulnerable in its relations with the West, in particular following Moscow's defeat in the Crimean War.⁹ In addition to defeats on the battlefield, Russia was seen as failing to comply with the nineteenth-century standard of internal governance. This assessment had a negative bearing on its recognition as a great power.¹⁰ Up to 1914, Tsarist Russia did not manage to make up this recognition gap. The Bolsheviks' political project, in turn, placed revolutionary Russia entirely outside the framework of international society.¹¹ This uncertain status continued during the Cold War, despite the fact that the Soviet Union was one of the world's two superpowers and as such, for Hedley Bull, constituted one of the pillars of international society.¹²

The break-up of Soviet rule was initially thought to have ended the 'dissociation of the Soviet Union from the West'.¹³ Post-Cold War Russia was interpreted in terms of: integration into the 'community of civilized states'; striving to 'adapt' to global Western-led institutions; being involved in a 'quest' for international society and recognition as a great power; or undergoing a 'slow and uneven process of adjustment towards the acceptance of common rules'.¹⁴ The main question for scholars was to what extent Russia could be integrated into Western-led international society, and how quickly and easily it could be integrated, suggesting thereby Russia's adaptive and passive

⁸ Bull, "The Revolt Against the West", 218. This affirmative stance with regard to Russia's role in international society has not prevented Bull from assessing that Russia in Europe 'has always been perceived as semi-Asiatic in character'. Ibid.

⁹ D. Lieven, "Dilemmas of Empire 1850-1918. Power, Territory, Identity", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34: 2, 1999: 170; D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian orientalism: Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration*, Kindle ed., New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 2010, 233.

¹⁰ The differences in Russia's governance, explained as its inability to meet Europe-wide standards, undermined its credentials to great powerhood and resulted in Russia's character as a European and civilised state being questioned. See I. B. Neumann, "Russia as a great power, 1815-2007", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11: 2, 2008: 37-38. In his later work Neumann offered a reconceptualization of Russia's entry into international society suggesting that it should not be framed in terms of expansion but in terms of the entrant passing from one system to another. Neumann, "Entry into international society reconceptualised: the case of Russia".

¹¹ There is no consensus within the English School on this subject. Adam Watson saw the Cold War international system as bipolar in structure but claimed it to be one international society, with a common structure of international law, diplomatic representation and rules inherited from European society. Watson, *The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis*, 290-298.

¹² Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*, 194-198.

¹³ Watson, "Russia and the European States System", 61.

¹⁴ Y. Stivachtis, "The Standard of 'Civilization' in Contemporary International Society: The Case of Russia's Entry into the 'Community of Civilized States'," in *Millennium Annual Conference. Rethinking the Standard(s) of Civilisation(s) in International Relations* (London: 2013).; Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 238.; P. Aalto, "Russia's quest for international society and the prospects for regional-level international societies", *International Relations*, 21: 4, 2007. I. B. Neumann, "Russia's Quest for Recognition as a Great Power, 1489-2007", *Institute of European Studies and International Relations Working Paper*: 1, 2007.; D. Averre, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Global Political Environment", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55: 5, 2008.

role.¹⁵ This way of framing the debate only confirmed and reinforced international society as a reified structure existing in the world.

The more assertive stance on the international scene adopted by Russia since the mid-2000s was interpreted as Moscow's preference for the pluralist vision of international society.¹⁶ Pluralism, with its stress on institutions of sovereignty, non-intervention and great power management, was deemed well suited as a description of Russia's re-defined role on the global stage. Moscow was seen as a fierce opponent of any broadening of the rights of international society to interfere in domestic politics, including by means of humanitarian intervention. With its vision of international order based on Westphalian principles,¹⁷ Russia was read as resisting the idea of international society guided by the principles of solidarity postulated by liberal democratic states. Nonetheless, its place in international society was not questioned. Russia continued to be seen as partaking of the 'thin' version of this society:

Russia does not reject the norms advanced by the main institutions of European international society, but it objects to what it sees as their instrumental application. Thus Russia has emerged as a neo-revisionist power, concerned not so much with advancing a set of alternative norms as ensuring the equal application of existing principles. Russia certainly does not repudiate engagement with international society, but at present is ready only for a relatively thin version. In this context Russia balks at being a passive norm-taker but does not present itself as a norm-innovator¹⁸

By late-2000s, however, Russia came to be characterised as a challenger to the interests and ideas of liberal-democratic states.¹⁹ Russia began to be depicted as outside the international society core. More recently the argument has been amended slightly but only to suggest that Russia has never been a fully-fledged member and remains 'suspended somewhere in the outer tier of international society'.²⁰

¹⁵ C. Browning, "Reassessing Putin's Project. Reflections on IR Theory and the West", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55: 5, 2008. These assessments were fuelled by Russia's decline in terms of its military power, its abandonment of the Soviet-era claim to universalism and by what seemed as ever closer relations with Western states, in particular with the European Union, throughout the 1990s. S. N. MacFarlane, "Russian Perspectives on Order and Justice", in *Order and justice in international relations*, ed. R. Foot, J.L. Gaddis, and A. Hurrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Aalto, "Russia's quest for international society and the prospects for regional-level international societies": 463; MacFarlane, "Russian Perspectives on Order and Justice", 199-201; Browning, "Reassessing Putin's Project. Reflections on IR Theory and the West": 7.

¹⁷ MacFarlane, "Russian Perspectives on Order and Justice", 201-202; Aalto, "Russia's quest for international society and the prospects for regional-level international societies": 462-463.; A. E. Stent, "Restoration and Revolution in Putin's Foreign Policy", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60: 6, 2008.

¹⁸ Sakwa, "Russia and Europe: whose society?": 197.

¹⁹ J. Mankoff, *Russian foreign policy: the return of great power politics*, Second ed., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield: 2012; Sakwa, "Russia and Europe: whose society?".

²⁰ Neumann, "Entry into international society reconceptualised: the case of Russia". This view is shared by scholars whose work does not engage with the international society interpretative framework. They point to Russia's 'semi-peripheral' status in the world capitalist economy. T. Hopf, "The evolution of Russia's place in the world: 1991-2011", *Demokratizatsiya*, 20: 3, 2012.

Russia's interpretation of international relations remained largely unaccounted for by this strand of literature, which focused on providing its own narrative of the events guided by the master concept of international society.

Portraying the international: the sources of Russia's view on international politics

Is it actually possible to identify a Russian conception of the international? A large part of the literature stemming from Russia is guided by a research agenda similar to that of the English School, i.e. to describe Russia's relations with 'the world' rather than to study Russia's representations of the international. Even Gadzhiyev who titled one of his chapters 'The Russian view of the world' (*Russkii vzgliyad na ostalnyi mir*), under this heading goes on to discuss Russia, its place and role internationally.²¹ Russian literature on IR often adapts Western theoretical approaches, slightly adjusting them to Russian 'circumstances'.²² It is not uncommon to see the employment of Martin Wight's three traditions of interpreting international politics (realist, rationalist and revolutionary) to account for Russian post-Soviet politics and the work of Alexander Sergounin stands out as an example.²³ But a great deal of Russian scholarly work constructs a unique representation of the international realm rather than applying Western IR theory.²⁴ Some of it is explicit in this attempt, for instance the 'controversial' Russian geopolitical thinker Alexander Dugin has been developing 'Theory of a Multipolar World'.²⁵ Policy discourse, especially following the Maidan revolution in Ukraine in 2014, has become even bolder in producing specific representations of the international.

Several elements affect Russia's worldview and contribute to the construction of idiosyncratic narratives of international relations: firstly, the interpretation of historical experience and geography; secondly, Russian political thought and questions important for the construction of Russian identity; finally, approaches to and objectives of studying international politics, which continue to be influenced by the heritage of the Soviet IR scholarship. Although interrelated, these elements can

²¹ K. S. Gadzhiyev, *Sravnitelnyi analiz natsionalnoi identichnosti SShA i Rossii*, Moskva: Logos: 2014.

²² P. A. Tsygankov, ed., *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya: teorii, konflikty, dvizheniya, organizatsii*, 2nd ed., (Moskva: Alfa-M: INFRA-M, 2008); V. A. Achkasov and V. A. Gutorov, eds., *Politologiya*, (Moskva: Vysshee obrazovaniye, 2008).

²³ A. Sergounin, "Russian Post-Communist Foreign Policy Thinking at the Crossroads", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 3: 3, 2000. For a more detailed exploration of this argument see: N. Morozova, "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin", *Geopolitics*, 14: 4, 2009.

²⁴ See e.g. a chapter in the textbook on political science devoted to Russia's place in international politics, which discusses the issue through the lens of geopolitics (I.E. Timermanis (ed.), *Politologiya. Uchenbnik dliya bakalavrov* (Moskva: Yurait 2015)) or Andrei P. Tsygankov's attempt to explain international relations using ideas elaborated in Russian political thought (A. P. Tsygankov, *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya: traditsii russkoi politicheskoi mysli*, Moskva: Alfa-M, Infra-M: 2013).

²⁵ A. Dugin, *Yevraziiskii revansh Rossii*, Moskva: Algoritm 2014. Dugin's contribution to IR theory was recently introduced in more detail to the English-speaking audience in the Theory Talks series. Theory Talk's editor presented Dugin as a 'controversial figure' who, despite or due to his alleged influence on Putin's foreign policy, should be taken into account in outlining the Russian perspective on the discipline and practice of international relations', 'Alexander Dugin on Eurasianism, the Geopolitics of Land and Sea, and a Russian Theory of Multipolarity', *Theory Talk*, Issue 66, December 7, 2014.

also differ fundamentally in terms of their approach to knowledge, i.e. the possibilities, limitations and sources of knowing. While the strand discussing Russian identity allows for a more reflexivist approach to knowledge, IR scholarship, particularly the strand following the Soviet school, aims at scientific accuracy and claims to be revealing truth. The consequence is that elements of Russian discourse on the international prove contradictory. The next section will discuss each source in some detail.

Historical experience and interpretation

Historical narratives are crucial for the production of specific contemporary representations of the international realm. The historical development of Russia and the West, though connected in many ways, cannot be claimed to have followed the same trajectory.²⁶ The experience of certain historical events, as well as narratives developed to explain them, differ starkly between Russia and the West. There are also differences in the approach to historical knowledge. In Russia history remains the privileged source of truth, which speaks not only to the past but also to the present. The elevated status of historical knowledge coexists with an emotional attachment to historical events developed among the general public. As Sergei Oushakine aptly put it, Russians ‘create some sort of an emotional relation with the past’ and live in the past instead of learning from it.²⁷

One of the most striking contemporary examples of disjuncture in the interpretation of historical events is the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which left a legacy of resentment in Russia and a sense of triumph in the West. For Russians, the fall of the Soviet Union was not only hard to accept but also difficult to believe in: ‘what seemed impossible became a reality. The USSR fell apart. (...) few people realised how truly dramatic those events and their consequences would be.’²⁸ Russian academic textbooks refer to the fall of the Soviet Union in terms of an event that drastically altered the geopolitical situation ‘on the planet Earth’ (*na planete v tselom*).²⁹ This attitude is broadly shared by the Russian elite: ‘... the sudden crash of and dissolution of a great and powerful state, which existed for many centuries and to which they belonged. This catastrophe seems inexplicable not only for the man in the street, but for many intellectuals and politicians’.³⁰ Vladimir Putin called it ‘the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century’ and an ‘outrageous historical injustice’.³¹

²⁶ Richard Pipes, ‘To imperium się rozpadnie, Rozmowa z Richardem Pipesem’ [This empire will fall apart. Interview with Richard Pipes], *Arka*, No. 33, 1991.

²⁷ S. Oushakine, ‘We are good at keeping quiet — about many things...’, *Free4Russia*, 23 June 2015, <http://www.4freerussia.org/we-are-good-at-keeping-quiet-about-many-things/> and <http://www.4freerussia.org/we-do-not-learn-from-the-past-we-live-in-it/>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Timermanis, *Politologiya. Uchenbnik dliya bakalavrov*: 650.

³⁰ Y. Borko, ‘Possible scenarios for geopolitical shifts in Russian-European relations’, in *Geopolitics in post-wall Europe: security, territory and identity*, ed. P. Baev, V.I. Einagel, and O. Tunander (Oslo, London: PRIO, Sage, 1997), 205.

³¹ V. Putin, *Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*, 25 April 2005; V. Putin, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, last accessed 19 March 2014.

It is important to note at this point that there is no neat dividing line between a viewpoint, which is by no means natural, and historical revisionism or a purposeful idealisation and restoration of the positive image of the former regime in Russia. As of mid-2000s, the rehabilitation of the Soviet heritage became part of the officially promoted historical identity, a trend symbolically reflected in the restoration of the Soviet Union's anthem, the reconstruction of Stalin's monuments in the vicinities of Moscow and a return to festive celebrations of the victory in the *Great Patriotic War 1941-1945*.³² The latter can be interpreted as an instrument of historical policy aimed at the consolidation of society. The celebrations are accompanied by a largely uncritical narrative dismissing the social costs of the victory. 2009 saw the establishment of a Committee whose task has been to counteract any attempts to 'falsify history' which may be detrimental to the interests of Russia (*Kommissiya pri Prezidente Rossiiskoi Federatsii po protivodeistviyu popytkam falsifikatsii istorii v ushcherb interesam Rossii*). Despite the fact that the Committee did not take any specific action and was ultimately dissolved in 2012, those historians who would wish to question the official interpretation of history may have resorted to self-censorship.³³

While it has been habitual in Western scholarship to refer to the break-up of the Soviet Union or the fall of communism as important markers denoting the end of the post-1945 historical era, Russia in its official discourse prefers to refer to the fall of the Berlin Wall rather than to the breakup of the Soviet Union as a marker of a significant change: 'But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia (...)'.³⁴ This distinction illustrates Russia's uneasiness with portraying the USSR in a negative light and a preference for presenting the Soviet Union as the initiator of positive changes.

Since any historical narrative involves making a choice about which events to include, approaching history from a specific perspective involves selecting particular historical events and incorporating them into contemporary political discourse.³⁵ In Russia's case importance has been placed on the Second World War and the post war peace settlement:

'Beginning from the Primakov times [since he became Russia's foreign minister in 1996] journalists began publishing books praising the Yalta agreement and underlining that Russia

³² N. Potapova, "Normativity in Russian History Education: Political Patterns and National History Textbooks", *JSSSE-Journal of Social Science Education*, 14: 1, 2014; J. Zajda, "The Politicizing of Russian History Education in the Russian Media", *Educational Practice and Theory*, 36:2, 2014.

³³ W. Konończuk, "Dekomunizacja, której nie było" [Decommunisation that did not take place], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 8 June 2015, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/dekomunizacja-ktorej-nie-bylo-28644>.

³⁴ V. Putin, *Vystupleniye i Diskussiya Na Miunkhenskoj Konferentsii Po Voprosam Politiki Bezopasnosti*, 10 Fevraliya Munich: 2007.

³⁵ Anne L. Clunan argues that the choice of historical legacies to be incorporated into national identities depends on aspirations a particular nation tends to collectively uphold. A. L. Clunan, *The social construction of Russia's resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 2009.

is against any revisions of the results of the WWII. Russia sees the world through Yalta and Potsdam agreements; the US through 9/11'.³⁶

The conflict that the West describes as the Second World War (and dates as starting in 1939 and finishing in 1945) is framed in Russia as the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and has often been described as the foundational myth of Putin's Russia.³⁷ The Yalta agreements have been used to reinforce Russia's international standing. Stressing the key role played by Russia, Putin juxtaposed the long peace following the Yalta agreement with the failure of the Versailles Treaty, where Russia had no place at the table.³⁸ The Soviet Union's victory over the Nazi Germany is used to justify Russia's privileged place in the world.³⁹ This victory is represented as uniting Russia with its post-Soviet neighbours. The *shared* experience of the *Great Patriotic War* has been recently heavily exploited on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of its conclusion, celebrated in May 2015.⁴⁰ Russian official discourse supplemented the numerous references to the Second World War concluding agreements with allegations of their breaking or misrepresentation on part of Western states:

Russia and China maintain the same approaches to the assessment of the WWII outcome. They can be found, in particular, in the Joint Statement of the President of the Russian Federation and the President of the People's Republic of China on the 65th Anniversary of the End of World War II, issued in Beijing on September 27, 2010. The solidarity of our countries is of significant importance against the background of constant attempts to falsify the history, negate the deeds of soldiers-liberators, and whitewash German fascism and Japanese militarism. We believe that recognition in full extent of WWII outcomes, which are fixed in the UN Charter and other international documents, is imperative for all the states. First of all, it is the inviolability of all the decisions taken by victorious powers.⁴¹

The distinct interpretation of history is supplemented by differences in Western and Russian geographical depictions of the world.⁴² Geography, rather than a product of scientific reasoning, is very much subject to interpretation. Terms such as Asia or the East become described or mapped onto the world in specific ways depending on who does the mapping. In addition, seeming purely geographical (read: scientific) denominations, such as the East and the West of Europe, may acquire

³⁶ Dr Konstantin Khudoley, Head of European Studies Department, School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, guest lecture "Understanding Russia's Foreign Policy", 27.02.2014 Aberystwyth University.

³⁷ M. V. Linan, "Modernization and Historical Memory in Russia", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 59: 6, 2012: 21-23.

³⁸ *Zasedaniye mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba «Valdai»*, 19 September 2013, <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19243>.

³⁹ E. A. Wood, "Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of World War II in Russia", *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 38: 2, 2011.

⁴⁰ I. Okuniyev, "Raznyye Realnosti", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 13: 2, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Raznye-realnosti-16583>.

⁴¹ Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the *China Daily* published on April 15, 2014, source: Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/44375f6eee6a82c944257cbb002097b6!OpenDocument (last accessed 20 April 2014). Russia has been promoting similar declarations, directed against alleged attempts to falsify history of World War II, in relations with such states as Israel.

⁴² A. de Lazari, O. Riabow and M. Żakowska, *Europa i niedźwiedź* [Europe and the Bear], (Warszawa 2013): 43-46.

symbolic meaning in the course of their employment. While in Western European cultural depictions, the East can receive negative connotations, in the Russian culture, the East tends to acquire a positive meaning. The former Soviet republics of Central Asia, in turn, tend to be depicted in Russia not as parts of Asia but as components of the post-Soviet space (*post-sovetskoye prostranstvo*) or Eurasia.⁴³ Particularly in the 1990s these states tended to be described with a politically loaded term of ‘the near abroad’ (*blizhnee zarubezhe*). The term did not fall into a complete disuse and returned in the official names accorded to associations gathering Russian compatriots.⁴⁴ In some competition with the term Eurasia, Russian discourse stretches the conception of Europe. In an oft repeated statement concerning either security or the economy, Europe encompasses an area ‘from Lisbon to Vladivostok’.⁴⁵ The malleability of geography is perhaps best illustrated with the positioning of Ukraine, which is depicted as either occupying the post-Soviet area, or as part of Russia, as a key component of Eurasia or as belonging to the ‘broader European space’. Especially following the Maidan Revolution there has been an upsurge in specific geographical depictions of Ukraine. Yevgenii Satanovskii, the president of the Middle East Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, wrote in 2014 that Ukraine has always been part of the Russian World. Ukraine’s very name is to denote to its location at the edge of Russia (‘*okraina bolshogo russkogo mira*’).⁴⁶

Soviet scholarship

In addition to historical experience, another important factor influencing contemporary Russian thinking on international affairs and the representation of the international realm that is constructed in Russia is the heritage of Soviet scholarship. Contemporary social sciences and political thought are influenced by and make references to the ‘Soviet legacy’.⁴⁷ It is thus relevant to provide an exposition of the Soviet approach to IR; one which would be sufficiently brief not to distort the main argument and one which would avoid the attribution of perfect theoretical consistency to Soviet IR.⁴⁸

⁴³ B. Lo, *Russia's Eastern direction - distinguishing the real from the virtual*, Institut français des relations internationales 2014, 7-8. Neumann develops the argument about the constructivist view of geography suggesting that Russian discourse on Europe on vice versa co-constructed the understanding of what it Russia and what is Europe construction. I. B. Neumann, “The geopolitics of delineating 'Russia' and 'Europe': the creation of the 'Other' in European and Russian tradition”, in *Geopolitics in post-wall Europe: security, territory and identity*, ed. P. Baev, V.I. Einagel, and O. Tunander (Oslo, London: PRIO, Sage, 1997), 148.

⁴⁴ For instance in June 2015 Rossotrudnichestvo, Russian federal government agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, compatriots and humanitarian cooperation, reported on a IV Regional Conference of Russian Compatriots of the Near Abroad Countries.

⁴⁵ M. Menkiszak, *Greater Europe. Putin's vision of European (dis)integration*, OSW Studies 46, Warszawa: OSW 2013.

⁴⁶ Y. Satanovskii, *Shla by ty... Zametki o natsionalnoi idee*, Moskva: Eksmo: 2014, 443.

⁴⁷ Interview with senior IR scholar, St Petersburg University, 27.02.2014. In addition, Makarychev and Morozov argue that ‘the Soviet legacy and the poor quality of institutions in contemporary Russia contributed to the relative isolation of Russian academic community in the social sciences’. Makarychev and Morozov, “Is “Non-Western Theory” Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR”: 332.

⁴⁸ This description is based primarily on three major English-language works devoted to the topic of Soviet IR: A. Lynch, *The Soviet study of international relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1987; Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*; W. Zimmerman, *Soviet perspectives on international relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1969. The difference, apart from the time period these works are concerned with, is that their authors decided to approach Soviet IR through distinctive perspectives. Zimmerman focuses on actors, hierarchy and distribution of power, which he complemented with an exposition of the emergence of IR as a discipline in post-WWII Russia. Lynch

The emergence or at least the significant appraisal of the discipline of IR in Russia is usually located in the post-Stalinist period.⁴⁹ In Soviet times policy practice was statutorily motivated by Marxist-Leninist ideology.⁵⁰ Theory employed elements of Marxist doctrine or stood as an outright synonym to Marxist ideology. Theory was therefore articulated almost habitually but with little precision, given that Soviet Marxism-Leninism itself was not a neat summary of Marx or Lenin's theses. Importantly, theory and practice were considered interdependent. Practice could not exist without theory, especially in that theory was believed to have an 'organising, mobilising and transforming' function.⁵¹ Soviet policy was deemed scientific because it was guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology based on objective laws of social development and, naturally, revealing the objective truth.⁵² Soviet theory enabled, so it was believed, Soviet decision-makers to anticipate the direction and the outcome of international affairs. Policy, in turn, was to have a feedback effect on theory.⁵³ The claim of a close relation between theory and practice was not, however, substantiated by any exposition of the connection between particular foreign policy action and relevant theoretical grounds for it. The other characteristic of the knowledge-policy conundrum was that key policymakers – Lenin in the first place and also Stalin and Khrushchev – demonstrated ambitions to produce general propositions on international politics.⁵⁴

The Soviet Union rejected the very idea of the society of states, promoting instead the worldwide expansion of communism. The working class, rather than states, was the primary frame of reference for the organisation of political relations. Soviet theorists, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, did not view states as occupying an unchallenged position as the most prominent actors in international relations. Following a Marxist-Leninist script with its imagery of classes as historical agents, Soviet scholars saw the interplay between states as just one aspect of international relations.⁵⁵

approached the subject through political studies, sociology of IR and the system approach. Light approached Soviet IR through three types of relations: with capitalist states, with the developing world and among communist states.

⁴⁹ Zimmerman reports that prior to 1956, there have been important works produced by diplomatic historians (Eugene Tarle) and international lawyers (Eugene Korovin and Feodor Kozhevnikov) as well as by Stalin himself, e.g. 'Economic problems of Socialism in the USSR' where he defended Lenin's theory of the inevitability of wars. Zimmerman, *Soviet perspectives on international relations*. (chapter 2).

⁵⁰ Marx and Engels interpreted the world through the prism of great power politics, which was common among nineteenth century historians in Britain. Lenin, in turn, merged the materialist conception of history with voluntary human activity, especially when revolutionary activity was in question, thus international politics acquired some autonomy in respect to economic forces, see Lynch, *The Soviet study of international relations*, 8-9.

⁵¹ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 1, 4. Marxism assumed the revolutionary unity of theory and practice, see Zimmerman, *Soviet perspectives on international relations*. Western analysts were divided as to whether the Soviet foreign policy was motivated primarily by ideology or power. Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 2.

⁵² Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 8. Interestingly, as Light reports, Soviet theorists believed that all systems of ideas were the product of social consciousness but the working class standpoint, openly adopted by dialectical materialism, did not preclude objectivism: 'subjective interests of the proletariat coincide with objective laws of development' (p. 8), 'the Soviet view of what constitutes scientific methodology and science is so self-evidently far from Western concepts of science that it is simpler to agree to disagree (p. 10).

⁵³ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 316.

⁵⁴ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 74. With the book *Perestroika: the new thinking for our country and the world*, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last secretary general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union became an influential figure in carving the Soviet perspective on the international.

⁵⁵ Zimmerman, *Soviet perspectives on international relations*, 79.

They stipulated that relations between socialist and capitalist states were markedly different from those among socialist states as well as those between socialist and less developed countries. The Soviet Union regarded the 'Third World' through a theory of 'general crisis of capitalism', which was based on the assumption that the historical process inevitably leads towards the socialist system and the gradual weaning away of the capitalist-imperialist influence.⁵⁶ After Nikita Khrushchev took over the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, relations between the USSR and the less developed states were to be built on the 'promotion of progress', 'non-capitalist path of development' and their drawing away from the West. Meanwhile, the goal in terms of relations with the US was to attain strategic parity and maintain a global power position.⁵⁷

Peace stood out among important themes in the Soviet approach to international relations. Scholarly literature and policy discourse underscored the 'peace-loving nature' of Soviet foreign policy.⁵⁸ But, while a number of policies were launched under the banner of peace support, there was little conceptual analysis dedicated explicitly to the subject of peace. Margaret Light described it aptly: 'It is almost as if the meaning and content of peace have been taken for granted by Soviet theorists'.⁵⁹

The reliance on Marxist-Leninist doctrine and programmatic anti-Westernism did not prevent the Soviets from borrowing certain concepts from the West. Deterrence theory was one prominent example.⁶⁰ But these borrowings were not an indication of convergence with Western patterns of political thinking. As long as concepts and theories employed by Western political scientists could be incorporated into and provide greater sophistication for the general class model of society, their integration into this model served to reinforce the model rather than stimulating any questions of the model's fundamental elements.⁶¹

Soviet methodology and claims to validity differed from Western approaches to knowledge production. A particular polemical style, characterised by frequent recourse to quoting, especially from classical socialist writers, was used to balance the absence of evidence, examples or illustrations

⁵⁶ R. C. Tucker, *The Soviet political mind: studies in Stalinism and post-Stalin change*, New York ; London: Frederick A. Praeger: 1963, 181; B. Sen Gupta, "An approach to the study of Soviet politics for the third world", in *Soviet economic and political relations with the developing world*, ed. R.E. Kanet and D. Bahry (New York: Praeger, 1975).

⁵⁷ E. Kridl Valkenier, "The Soviet Union and the Third World: from Khrushchev's 'Zone of peace' to Brezhnev's 'Peace programme'", in *Soviet economic and political relations with the developing world*, ed. R.E. Kanet and D. Bahry (New York: Praeger, 1975), 4-5.

⁵⁸ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 237. Soviet theorists and political leaders employed the Leninist principle of 'peaceful coexistence' to describe and, arguably, guide relations between socialist and capitalist states. Light defines the doctrine as 'competition...stopping short of military confrontation' Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 25. and as one which shifts conflict to the realm of economic and ideological spheres Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 29.

⁵⁹ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 238. Light did not identify entries for 'peace' in diplomatic dictionaries or the Dictionary of scientific communism, despite there being a wealth of writing on the theory of war.

⁶⁰ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 244.

⁶¹ Oded Eran, *Soviet Area Studies and foreign policy, 1974*, Santa Barbara, p. 12 reference after Lynch, *The Soviet study of international relations*, 31. In the 1960s several scholars started questioning the adequacy of Marxist-Leninist axioms for the study of international relations and attempted developing a more independent conceptual apparatus. Dmitri Yermolenko for instance, in 1966, suggested to discuss world problems within the 'sociology of international relations' and to approach international relations as social processes. Lynch, *The Soviet study of international relations*, 40.

that supported the arguments. The writing was rich in description but limited in argument. Claims were rarely substantiated and tended towards the descriptive rather than the analytical. Methodology was rarely explained and assumptions behind the ‘dialectical method’ were never outlined in detail.⁶²

In general, theory was used with three purposes in mind: to legitimize; to justify; and as a ‘cohesive device’ to forge a multinational socialist system. As Margot Light puts it:

although Soviet state interests and the interests of the international working class (...) are usually said by Soviet theorists to be identical, it is not necessarily the case that this is obvious either to the Soviet public or to other members of the international working class. When it is not universally perceived to be the case, theory has a vital role in explaining how the international interest is best served.⁶³

The Soviet approach to facts and theory as well as political pressure on social scientists in the Soviet Union not to engage with Western or “bourgeois” type of thinking, created a wide knowledge and understanding gap.⁶⁴ Perestroika started to open up Russian scholarship to foreign influences. Under Mikhail Gorbachev and the ‘new thinking’ doctrine, the Soviet Union was to reconsider its understanding of and relationship with the outside world.⁶⁵ Gorbachev’s book *Perestroika* was famously addressed ‘to the citizens of the whole world’ and was an invitation to dialogue on the future of global politics. It had a specific intention – ‘we want to be understood’ – and a clear objective: ‘to strengthen international trust’.⁶⁶ Gorbachev’s work, however, was not a break with the past. It continued the Soviet tradition, particularly in its reliance on Lenin as ‘an ideological source of Perestroika’:

The works of Lenin and his ideals of socialism remained for us an inexhaustible source of dialectical creative thought, theoretical wealth and political sagacity. His very image is an undying source example of lofty moral strength (...). Lenin lives on in the minds and hearts of millions of people. (...) The Leninist period is instructive in that it proved the strength of Marxist-Leninist dialectics, the conclusions of which are based on an analysis of the actual historical situation.⁶⁷

In his book Gorbachev interpreted the world as divided into three groups with distinct interests: socialist, capitalist, and belonging to the ‘Third World’.⁶⁸ This work was premised on the assumption, still very much in vogue, of the equal standing of the Soviet Union and the US. It was a visionary manifesto that contained little concrete detail of how to implement the ideals it put forward.

⁶² Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 317-322.

⁶³ Light, *The Soviet theory of international relations*, 328.

⁶⁴ Makarychev and Morozov, “Is “Non-Western Theory” Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR”: 333. See also Aleksei Bogaturov, ‘Desiat Let Paradigmy Osvoenia’, *Pro et Contra*, 5:1, 2000.

⁶⁵ M. S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, London: Collins: 1987.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, 25-26.

⁶⁸ Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, 136.

In a chapter entitled, 'Our road to a new outlook', Gorbachev outlined the inspiration for his writing rather than proposed any steps to take. He also stood firm on the perseverance of socialism: 'no one can close down the world of socialism'.⁶⁹

Declaring the desire to avoid international confrontation, Gorbachev underscored the high moral standing of the Soviet Union:

We do not wish to handle international affairs in a manner that would heighten confrontation. While we do not approve the character of current relations between the West and the developing countries, we do not urge that they should be disrupted. We believe these relations should be transformed by ridding them of neo-colonialism, which differs from the old colonialism only in that its mechanism of exploitation is more sophisticated.⁷⁰

Gorbachev's views on multilateral cooperation expose his criticism of the West's exclusionary approach to international affairs:

By all indications, the West would like to keep things in the family, so to speak, within the Sevens, the Fives and the like. This probably explains the attempts to discredit the United Nations. It is alleged, for instance, that the UN is losing its meaning and that it is almost disintegrating.⁷¹

In contradiction to the club-like Western approach, Gorbachev presented international security as indivisible. The only solid foundation for security was the recognition of the equality of peoples and countries.⁷²

Studying and speaking about international politics

There are several characteristics of the contemporary Russian approach to the discipline of IR that need outlining.⁷³ On the most general level, the Russian IR debate is usually framed in terms of foreign policy analysis even if the spectrum of ideas discussed is much broader.⁷⁴ Compared with British academia, there is less scope for pluralism. Several academic figures, usually with experience in the world of policymaking, such as Yevgeny Primakov, establish priorities and set the tone. Russian academics tend to be the product of the educational system they themselves construct. Young scholars follow intellectual directions established by their predecessors to climb up the career

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, 139-140.

⁷¹ Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, 140.

⁷² Gorbachev, *Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world*, 142.

⁷³ The state of IR discipline in Russia has not been comprehensively researched so far. Only a few contributions offered reflections on this topic: Y. Pavlova and T. Romanova, "Ideinoye Sopernichestvo Ili «Tresh-Diskurs»", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 13: 4, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Ideinoe-sopernichestvo-ili-tresh-diskurs-16767> (last accessed 13 December 2014); Morozova, "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin"; Makarychev and Morozov, "Is "Non-Western Theory" Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR"; A. P. Tsygankov and P. A. Tsygankov, "National ideology and IR theory: Three incarnations of the 'Russian idea'", *European Journal of International Relations*, 16: 4, 2010.

⁷⁴ For instance, Morozova, discusses Eurasianism and geopolitics as feature of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy debate Morozova, "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin".

path. Few had experience overseas and Western-trained academics do not return to undertake scholarly work in Russia. As a result, Russian thinking on IR becomes dogmatic and stagnant. The broader public debate is animated largely by commentators affiliated with think-tanks that are supportive or sympathetic rather than independent or critical of the Kremlin. Two such examples are: the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (SVOP, *Sovet po vneshnei i oboronnoi politike*) and the Valdai Club. The former in its reports promotes both the idea of multipolarity and the necessity for Russia to conduct an independent foreign policy, without any dependence on the West.⁷⁵ The latter creates the impression of Western scholarship as biased against Russia.⁷⁶

Writing style and translation challenges add to the specificities of the Russian debate about the international. The writing about politics is frequently descriptive and takes refuge in metaphor, resorts to sayings and implicit comparisons and shies away from conclusive statements. It offers little in the way of detail and the vagueness of its arguments makes a critical engagement difficult. That Russia ‘stood up from its knees’ (*Rossiia vstala s kolen*) is a metaphor popularly used to describe Russia’s natural and legitimate regaining of its due international position.⁷⁷ It is difficult to find an English language equivalent of *velikaya derzhava* a phrase which is often used to describe Russia. ‘Great power’ is a simplification, since *derzhava* may refer to power, might, or dominion and is also said to have a certain mystique to it.⁷⁸ *Russkii mir* may mean both the Russian World but also Russian peace.

A relatively common phenomenon in academic textbooks is the manipulation of the timeframe that is used. Extensive references to history leave little space for a discussion of contemporary issues even in works supposedly dedicated to the analysis of present-day affairs. The accounts of the past serve as convenient substitutes for the discussion of the present.⁷⁹

The border between translation challenges and purposeful misrepresentation of concepts is blurred, especially in the policy discourse. For instance, the term ‘humanitarian’, though not unproblematic in Western scholarly and policy discourse, is usually attached to life-saving issues and

⁷⁵ Based on an interview with a senior UK based Russian scholar who received his training both in Russia and the UK, 18 June 2014.

⁷⁶ See e.g. *Valdai Paper Special Issue: War is Peace* by Andrei Bystritsky, <http://valdaiclub.com/publication/75660.html> (last accessed 28 February 2015).

⁷⁷ There is also an array of metaphors describing Russia’s domestic politics. ‘The Kremlin has many towers’ denotes to different power centres in Russia’s government and their possibly conflicting aims. This theme has been developed further by Andrey Makarychev who explains metaphors are an important discursive tool used in Russia’s identity construction A. S. Makarychev, “Images, metaphores, and power: reinventing the grammar of Russian trans-border regionalism”, in *Russia's identity in international relations: images, perceptions, misperceptions*, ed. R. Taras (2013).

⁷⁸ R. Taras, “The power of images and the images of power: past and present identity in Russia's international relations”, in *Russia's identity in international relations: images, perceptions, misperceptions*, ed. R. Taras (2013), 1; P. Baev, “Russia's departure from empire: self-assertiveness and a new retreat”, in *Geopolitics in post-wall Europe: security, territory and identity*, ed. P. Baev, V.I. Einagel, and O. Tunander (Oslo, London: PRIO, Sage, 1997), 186; O. Kharkhordin, *Main concepts of Russian politics*, Lanham, MD; Oxford: University Press of America: 2005.

⁷⁹ Especially the most recent editions are selective with regard to post-2000s events taking place in Russia and the post-Soviet space they decide to cover. No comments are offered on Putin’s third presidential term in particular. See, for example, the 2015 edition of the political science textbook (*Politologiya*), which in the section dedicated to the political modernization of contemporary Russia finalizes its analysis on the year 2008 and the beginning of Medvedev’s presidency. See Timermanis, *Politologiya. Uchenbnik dliya bakalavrov*, 588-589.

used in the context of humanitarian aid. In the Russian discourse, its meaning is closer to the term 'humanistic' and becomes related to tourism and youth exchanges, as in this passage: 'Chinese-Russian humanitarian cooperation has been developing dynamically. The Year of Chinese Tourism in Russia concluded with success, and (...) Friendly Youth Exchanges are to be held in the two countries'.⁸⁰

Differences in meaning, resulting partly from translation difficulties and partly from purposeful misrepresentation, are not easily questioned. Concepts such as liberalism or democracy, which in Western scholarship are filled with meaning embedded in historical experience, seem more malleable in Russia. This lack of specific experiences with how these concepts are put into practice contributes to the concepts' greater openness to interpretation and their susceptibility to acquire meanings radically different from those that academia and the policy world may be accustomed to in the West. The explanation of concepts crucial for understanding contemporary affairs is characterized by eclecticism and internal contradictions. For instance, geopolitics is depicted without any critique as 'naturally' focused on great powers and their privileges over other states, while at the same time authors admit that one of the functions of geopolitics is to promote ideology.⁸¹

The re-interpretation of specific terms is accompanied by uncertainty with regard to methodology. Some Russian scholars go as far as to claim that Russian IR scholarship lacks methodology.⁸² Pavlova and Romanova argue that, in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, Russian IR scholarship drew heavily on the Western ideas of IR but refrained from debating Western methodology. As a result, the application of a theory is interpreted as the declaration of the author's political orientation. Constructivism or discourse analysis is usually associated with a liberal political orientation, whereas a realist author becomes classified as a conservative, whose writing is oriented towards the defence of Russia's place in the world.⁸³

The positivist approach dominates IR scholarly writing and the quest for IR as proper science is usually satisfied with a recourse to American classics, as in this statement by Bordachev: 'Structural theory of Kenneth Waltz and his successors converted IR into proper science'.⁸⁴ This may be one of the reasons why Russian IR scholars tend to situate their research in the realist tradition, understood as focusing on material power. Irina Vasilenko, in a textbook on Russian politics, defines the task for

⁸⁰ Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, in an interview to *China Daily* published on April 15, 2014, source: Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/44375f6eee6a82c944257cbb002097b6!OpenDocument (last accessed 20 April 2014). The Russian word *gumanitarnyi* means both humanitarian and humanist.

⁸¹ Timermanis (ed.), *Politologiya. Uchenbnik dliya bakalavro*, 626-667.

⁸² Pavlova and Romanova, "Ideinoe Sopernichestvo Ili «Tresh-Diskurs»".

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ T. Bordachev, "Sila, Moral, Spravedlivost", *Rossiya v globalnoi politike*, 13: 2, 2014. Timofei Bordachev is Russian IR scholar and political commentator.

Russian political science as: ‘the scientific conduct of objective research on the current problems of Russian politics, followed by proposals of constructive solutions’.⁸⁵

Part of contemporary Russian IR scholarship claims that Western approaches are incapable of accounting for Russia’s uniqueness and proposes developing a specific Russian social theory accompanied with idiosyncratic terminology distinct from Western ideas.⁸⁶ This drive may be the result of a merger between an official political agenda and a section of Russian scholarly endeavours. Academia is frequently employed to provide background or a ‘scientific’ explanation for the political demagoguery of ‘sovereign democracy’ and politically motivated re-definitions such as the reframing of ‘soft power’ into a state’s sovereign right to protect its culture from Western dominance.⁸⁷ Andrei and Pavel Tsygankov took a pioneering attempt to characterize and classify Russian IR. They related major currents in Russian IR scholarship to three ideological traditions, identified as Westernism, Statism and Civilizationism, arguing that it was ideology and the perception of Self and the Other that influenced both the choice of IR theories and the understanding of particular IR concepts.⁸⁸ Makarychev and Morozov take, however, a critical stance towards what they term epistemological self-sufficiency: ‘any theory designed as purposely non-Western is bound to remain self-referential and, in the final analysis, irrelevant’.⁸⁹ This drive for uniqueness and concept-development has not yet found its way into Russian IR textbooks, which focus predominantly on discussing Western IR theories.⁹⁰

Contemporary representations of international politics: multipolarity and the victory of the Russian World

The idea of the Russian World (*Russkii mir*), which is increasingly articulated by Russian scholars and policymakers, constitutes the culmination of thinking about the international that has been developing in Russia since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Though it may seem novel, the

⁸⁵ I. A. Vasilenko, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika. Uchebnik dlia magistrrov*, Moskva: Yurait, 2014, 15-16.

⁸⁶ A comprehensive account of this trend was developed in: Makarychev and Morozov, “Is “Non-Western Theory” Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR”. See also Tsygankov, *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya: traditsii russkoi politicheskoi mysli*.

⁸⁷ Makarychev and Morozov, “Is “Non-Western Theory” Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR”: 329. See also K. Kosachev, “Ne Rybu, a Udochku”, *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 11: 5, 2012.

⁸⁸ Tsygankov and Tsygankov, “National ideology and IR theory: Three incarnations of the ‘Russian idea’”.

⁸⁹ Makarychev and Morozov, “Is “Non-Western Theory” Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR”: 333.

⁹⁰ Examples include: Tsygankov, “Self and Other in International Relations Theory: Learning from Russian Civilizational Debates” and Achkasov and Gutorov, eds., *Politologiya*, 579-595. Tsygankov identifies and recounts three major theoretical approaches (*naibolee izvestnyye paadigmy*): realism, liberalism-idealism and radicalism; engages with postmodernism and introduces IR sociology. The English School – termed the British school (*britanskaya shkola*) is discussed only marginally. Another typical textbook on political science, with the section devoted to international relations, analyses the major currents in Western IR scholarship since the 1950s with the focus on such scholars as: Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, James Rosenau, Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye. See also the textbook published under the aegis of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO: T.A. Shakleina, A.A. Baikov (ed.), *Megatrendy. Osnovnyye traiektorii evolutsii mirovogo poriyadka v XXI veke* (Moskva: Aspekt press 2014).

concept has important precedents dating back to the Tsarist and Soviet eras. Notions contributing to the idea of the Russian World, such as the Eurasian great power or Russian civilisation, have long been present but never dominated Russian discourse.⁹¹ Overshadowed, as they were, by approaches heralding pragmatism and denying ideological influences, they remained dormant and only sporadically resurfaced in policy and academic discourse.

Russia's internationalized identity

Russia's national identity is inherently related to the way Russia constructs its international status and how it reads other states' perceptions of this status. This is reinforced by the fact that Russia does not see itself as just a state among others; it sees itself as a great power.⁹² Russian academic and policy discourse of the 1990s took Russia's great power status for granted, with only a few voices of dissent.⁹³ In political discourse, *great powerness* was presented as an almost natural feature, a quality of Russia's character. Vladimir Putin famously declared: 'either Russia will be great or it will not be at all'.⁹⁴ Andrei Kozyrev remarked that Russia was 'doomed' to be a great power.⁹⁵

A state's constructions of self are influenced by its perception of others.⁹⁶ This observation has been made on several occasions, but it is important to add that the identities that a state develops influence its vision of the international arena. Since portrayals of the international in Russia are entangled with the views of self, national identity becomes both a source and a component of Russia's representation of the international. Russia's national identity tends to be constructed largely through a particular positioning of the Russian state on the international stage. In addition, the most recent literature stemming from Russian academia underscores differences between the image Russia has of itself and the way it is viewed in the West, which further complicates the self-the world construct.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Pavlova and Romanova, "Ideinoye Sopernichestvo Ili «Tresh-Diskurs»".

⁹² Taras, "The power of images and the images of power: past and present identity in Russia's international relations"; M. R. Freire, "Russian foreign policy in the making: The linkage between internal dynamics and the external context", *International Politics*, 49: 4, 2012: 470-471; Stent, "Restoration and Revolution in Putin's Foreign Policy": 1090-1092; B. Lo, "Evolution or Regression: Russian Foreign Policy in Putin's Second Term", in *Towards a Post-Putin Russia*, ed. H. Blakkisrud (NUPI, 2006), 70.

⁹³ Baev, "Russia's departure from empire: self-assertiveness and a new retreat", 185. The 1990s discourse was also pervaded by the perception of defeat and humiliation, hence the objective for Russia to 'get off its knees' and regain the great power status became principal goals of Russian foreign policy under Vladimir Putin. L. Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: the shaping of Russian foreign policy*, London: I. B. Tauris: 2004, 135-136.

⁹⁴ L. Shevtsova, *Russia-lost in transition: the Yeltsin and Putin legacies*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment: 2007.

⁹⁵ B. Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: reality, illusion, and mythmaking*, Houndmills, Basingstoke; Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan: 2002, 19.

⁹⁶ T. Hopf, *Social construction of international politics: identities & foreign policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 2002; Clunan, *The social construction of Russia's resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*. Hopf was among first scholars to propose a constructivist approach to analysing Russia's policies. The state's collection of identities, he argued, affects how that state or its leaders understand other states in world affairs.

⁹⁷ R. Taras, ed., *Russia's identity in international relations: images, perceptions, misperceptions*, (2013); S. G. Kara-Murza, *Rossiia i Zapad. Paradigmy osvoyeniya*, Moskva: Akademicheskii proyekt "Kultura": 2013.

Russian identity is a difficult terrain where philosophy, political thought, art and policy intermingle. A term related to the Russian idea and a relatively common metaphorical way of approaching Russian identity is by reference to the ‘Russian soul’ (*russkaia dusha*).⁹⁸ The meaning of this term is even more diffuse than the Russian idea and it is probably best reflected in the English word ‘culture.’ That ‘Russia can only be believed in’ is a cherished phrase that made itself very much at home in the Russian discourse. Its author, Fyodor Tyutchev, as a Russian poet and career diplomat, was himself an example of a merger of two rather different professional identities.⁹⁹ The identity question is often discussed in parallel with the need to determine Russia’s fate (*sud’ba Rossii*).¹⁰⁰ The specific mode of Russian writing about Russia, of which metaphors are just one characteristic, makes the attempt to conclude or summarize the Russian identity debate or to suggest a coherent set of values underpinning Russian society, an endeavour at serious risk of failure. The key question guiding the identity debate asks ‘What is Russia?’¹⁰¹ and it came back with a vengeance following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹⁰² The discontinuity in the Russian state system casts a shadow on Russian identity, which needed to be defined anew, in relation but also in opposition to *the Soviet*.¹⁰³

While the Russian idea debate springs from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s philosophical and literary writing, more recent works, such as *The Russian idea* by Igor Chubais,¹⁰⁴ rather than offering a framework helping to grasp the Russian value system, suggests we are faced with the problem of a complete absence thereof. The void is attributed to the destructive influence of bolshevism and can, in that author’s view, be filled only as a result of a turn to spirituality and history in search for norms underpinning societal cohesion. In that sense Chubais reminds us of the famous nineteenth century

⁹⁸ See e.g. Andrzej de Lazari (ed.), *Pol'skaya i rossiiskaya dusha (ot Adama Mitskevicha i Aleksandra Pushkina do Cheslava Milosha i Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna)*, Warszawa 2004.

⁹⁹ The entire verse of Tyutchev’s poem reads: ‘Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone, No ordinary yardstick can span her greatness: She stands alone, unique – In Russia, one can only believe’. Russian poets are relatively frequently interrogated and quoted on matters of contemporary politics, for another examples see Pavel Baev who refers to the late poet Joseph Brodsky deliberations on Russia’s great power status. Baev, “Russia’s departure from empire: self-assertiveness and a new retreat”, 186.

¹⁰⁰ Gadzhiyev, *Sravnitelnyi analiz natsionalnoi identichnosti SShA i Rossii*, 343.

¹⁰¹ S. S. Sulakshin, ed., *Natsiyonalnaya ideya Rossii*, (Moskva: Nauchnyi ekspert, 2012).

¹⁰² O. Malinova, “Russian and ‘the West’ in the 2000s: redefining Russian identity in official political discourse”, in *Russia’s identity in international relations: images, perceptions, misperceptions*, ed. R. Taras (2013); A. Piontkovsky, *East or West? Russia’s Identity Crisis in Foreign Policy*, London: Foreign Policy Centre 2013. For a thorough debate of the ‘What is Russia’ question in the Western literature see Clunan, who approached the theme from an innovative perspective of ‘aspirational constructivism’, supplementing key constructivist claims with insights from social psychology, with special reference to self-esteem. Clunan, *The social construction of Russia’s resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*, 3-11. The question of Russian identity has been also linked to Eurasianism and geopolitics. Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”.

¹⁰³ Clunan, *The social construction of Russia’s resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*.

¹⁰⁴ Chubais interprets the Russian idea as a system of values which has been subject to ‘historical mystification’ during the period of the construction of socialism. His book is presented as a contribution to ‘alternative, non-system social science’ and an attempt in ‘philosophical political journalism’ (pp.473). As such, the work does not make a distinction between terms such as Russian civilisation and identity. Igor Chubais authored several books on Russia’s identity: *Rossiya v poiskach sebiya* (Russia in search for itself), 1998; *Ot russkoi idei k ideye novoy Rossii* (From the Russian idea to the idea of a new Russia), 1996. The considerable attention these works received in the Russian media is attributed to the fact that Igor Chubais was the elder brother of Anatoly Chubais, one of the leading politicians and Yeltsin’s close advisors in the 1990s. F. Hill and C. G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 2013, 43-44.

concern with Russia's lack of a national identity.¹⁰⁵ This is, however, not a conclusion shared broadly. The national identity debate is heavily influenced by individuals from the top echelons of the Russian ruling elite. A monumental six volume work, *Russia's national idea*,¹⁰⁶ was co-edited by Vladimir Yakunin, who, at the time of its writing and publication, was the chairman of the Russian Railways and a persona closely associated with Vladimir Putin. The opus conveys a message that Russia still lacks and needs to create its post-Soviet national idea, for which the Russian civilization should be the main point of departure.

The discussion of the Russian idea, suffused with specifically understood terms such as great power (*velikaya derzhava*) and the nation's mission (*natsionalnaya missiya*), is interwoven with the claim for the existence of a distinct Russian civilization. The question of what constitutes Russia's civilizational identity has been the source of fierce debates, ranging from being a European outpost in Asia, the Eastern state with the European façade or a distinct civilisation, combining features of both the West and the East.¹⁰⁷ This civilizational approach to the question of Russia's identity underscores Russia's superiority with respect to other states.¹⁰⁸ Ivan Ivanov, a Russian IR scholar, proposes for instance:

On the moral plane, the Russian civilizational code contains [...] such canons as the primacy of the moral principle, priority of spiritual values over material ones, rejection of inequality and injustice, community of being, commitment to one's duty, patriotism, dedication to the ideal...¹⁰⁹

References to Russia as a unique civilization are frequent in post-Cold War Russian scholarship¹¹⁰ and figure conspicuously in political discourse. The notion of Russia as a distinct civilisation has been part and parcel of an intellectual current called Eurasianism. It stressed a specific path of Russia's historical development, emphasising the spatial dimension of the Russian state (*territorialno-prostranstvennyi faktor*) which critics described as 'territorial mysticism'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ P. Chaadaev, *Philosophical Letters*, 1836. For an elaboration of this argument, see W. Zimmerman, "Slavophiles and Westernizers redux: contemporary Russian elite perspectives", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 21: 3, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Sulakshin, ed., *Natsiyonalnaya ideya Rossii*.

¹⁰⁷ Z.A. Zhade, "Rossiiskaya tsivilizatsionnaya identichnost v meniyayushchimsiya mire", *Vlast'*, No. 4, 2014, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Taras, "The power of images and the images of power: past and present identity in Russia's international relations"; I. Prizel, *National identity and foreign policy: nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Ivan Ivanov, 'Anatomia Evropeiskikh Tsennostei', *Sovremennaya Evropa* 2, 2000, 21.

¹¹⁰ Irina Vasilenko refers to civilizational identity – understood as shared cultural code and norms – as the key integrating factor of Russia's political entity. See Vasilenko, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika. Uchebnik dlia magistrrov*, 21-23. Makarychev and Morozov, "Is 'Non-Western Theory' Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR": 345; Z. A. Zhade, "Rossiiskaya tsivilizatsionnaya identichnost v meniyayushchimsiya mire", *Vlast'*: 4, 2014; N. V. Zagladin, "Natsionalno-tsivilizatsionnaya identichnost Rossii: istoriya i sovremennost", in *Poisk natsionalno-tsivilizatsionnoi identichnosti i kontsept "osobogo puti" v rossiiskom massovom soznanii v kontekste modernizatsii*, ed. V.V. Lapkin and V.I. Pantin (Moskva: IMEMO RAN, 2004).

¹¹¹ For a broader critical discussion of Eurasianism, see Gadzhiev, *Sravnitelnyi analiz natsionalnoi identichnosti SShA i Rossii*, 358-364.

The civilizational component of the debate on Russia's identity may be seen as standing in stark contrast to the nationalist current. The way the concept of nationalism became incorporated into the discussion of Russia's post-Soviet identity, however, allows for the merger of Russian nation and civilisation. In this view, ethnic Russians are the avant-garde of the Russian civilisation.¹¹²

Russkii mir

Interpretations of the Russian World are still scarce among Western scholars. Some see it as an ethnocentric project waiting to be implemented,¹¹³ others as a foreign policy tool.¹¹⁴ I propose interpreting the Russian World as one among several comprehensive representations of the international co-produced among Russian scholars and policymakers.

The idea of the Russian World, still elusive as it continues to remain in the process of discursive elaboration, galvanised during Vladimir Putin's third term into a relatively coherent vision of the international realm. Russian civilisation, encompassing Russian culture, nation, language and the Russian Orthodox Church, is at the heart of this idea.¹¹⁵ In addition to ideational and cultural aspects, territory is crucial to the notion of the Russian World. For a number of Russian thinkers, the Russian World remained inherently related to the ideology of Eurasianism, which combined civilisation and territory.¹¹⁶ The official rhetoric bases the concept on historical ties linking Russia with its post-Soviet neighbours, the presence of ethnic Russians outside of the Russian Federation and the prevalence of Russian language in the post-Soviet space.¹¹⁷

The use of the notion *Russkii mir* can be traced back to the mid 2000s. At that time, *Russkii mir* was understood in terms of cultural space of all Russian-speaking individuals. The cultural interpretation of the Russian world found its reflection in Putin's speeches of the year 2007, the year officially dedicated to the Russian language. Back then Putin already spoke of the Russian world

¹¹² This is beyond the scope of this thesis but important arguments have been made on the Kremlin's reinforcement of the nationalist current in identity debate. V. Shlapentokh, "Behind the Five-Day War: The Ideological Backing of Putin's Regime", *Johnson's Russia List*, Vol. 195, No. 23 October 2008, 2008; Y. E. Fedorov, "The Sleep of Reason: The war on Georgia & Russia's foreign policy", *Research Paper*, Vol. 5/2008, 2008; S. Kasymov, "Statism in Russia: The implications for US–Russian relations", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 3, 2012.

¹¹³ L. Shevtsova, "Forward to the past in Russia", *Journal of Democracy*, 26:2, 2015.

¹¹⁴ M. Laruelle, *The "Russian World". Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*, Washington, DC: Center on Global Interests.

¹¹⁵ Y.A. Aseev, I.A. Kants, I.I. Kravchenko, *Russkii mir: analiz sostoyaniya, problemy* (Stavropol: Agrus 2014); N. Narochnitskaya, *Sosredotocheniye Rossii. Bitva za russkii mir* (Moskva: Knizhnyi mir 2015); A.V. Fomenko, *Russkii mir i geopoliticheskiye strannosti. Istoriya kak faktor politiki* (Moskva 2009); A.A. Guseinov, A.A. Kara-Murza, A.F. Yakovleva (ed.), *Russkii mir kak tsivilizatsionnoye prostranstvo* (Moskva: RAN Institut Filosofii 2011); *Russkii mir – 2012. Sbornik statii* (Moskva: Infra-M 2012); Z. M. Omarova, *Rossiya i "Russkii mir" blizhnego zarubezhya. Uchebnoye posobiye*, Moskva: Vostok-Zapad: 2011. See also: *Zasedaniye mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba «Valdai»*, 19 September 2013, <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19243> (last accessed 13 December 2013).

¹¹⁶ The most popular representative of this current is Alexandr Dugin. See for example: Dugin, *Yevraziiskii revansh Rossii*.

¹¹⁷ V. Putin, *Wystupleniye na sowshechaniy s poslami i postojannymi predstaviteliami Rossijskoj Federacii, 27 iyuniya 2006.*; V. Putin, "Rossiya i meniayushchiysya mir" *Moskovskie Novosti*, 12 February 2012; ROSSIYA, *Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossijskoj Federatsii, utwierzhdena prezidentom Rossijskoj Federatsii V. V. Putiny 12 fevraliya 2013 g.*, 2013.

‘broader than Russia itself’ but this phrase received cultural rather than geopolitical connotations.¹¹⁸ Valerii Tishkov associates the origins of the Russian World with Gorbachev’s ‘opening’, which enabled the Russian diaspora to re-engage with the Russian state.

The Russian World is not limited to ethnic Russians. The aim of granting protection to Russian compatriots living abroad¹¹⁹ coexists with the openness of the Russian World to all individuals who feel they belong to the ‘wider Russian World’.¹²⁰ Although the concept of the Russian World is not directed against anyone, there is an implicit opposition towards the West. Simultaneously, the Russian World is imagined as enjoying higher moral standing than the ‘degenerated’ Western civilization with its ‘extreme liberalism’.¹²¹

The reading of the international in terms of the Russian World was reinforced during Russia’s conflict with Ukraine. In the aftermath of the Maidan Revolution in early 2014, the Russian ruling elite wholeheartedly embraced and propagated the idea. In his programmatic speech following the annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin talked about the willingness to ‘restore unity’ to the Russian World. Crimea was termed ‘Russian native land’, Sevastopol the ‘Russian city’, and the Black Sea Fleet the ‘Russian military glory’.¹²² Vladimir Putin stressed that Russia and Ukraine are not only close neighbours but represent one nation, with Kiev as ‘the mother of Russian cities’ and the state of Old Rus’ as the common ancestor.¹²³

The idea of the Russian World implicitly divides the international realm into a broad Russia-centred polity and the remaining world, where the West plays a particular role. Contrary to the purported inclusiveness of the idea of international society, *Russkii mir* ostensibly divides the international realm between ‘us’ and ‘them’. As the international is divided into two spheres, the Russian World and the rest, it is bound to the concomitant feelings of superiority and inferiority. Russia’s moral superiority is reproduced and confirmed by the civilizational rhetoric but locating the menace to the Russian World directly in the West exposes the inferiority complex.

The idea of the Russian World transcends the borders of the Russian state in two, somewhat contradictory, ways. Firstly, it is based on the perception of the Russian nation spread across the post-Soviet space following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹²⁴ Secondly, it is the belief in Russia as a distinct civilization that cannot be limited to the borders of the Russian state. *Russkii mir* is composed of concentric circles where ethnic and orthodox Russians reside at the heart and are surrounded by

¹¹⁸ V. Tishkov, ‘Russkii mir. Smysl i strategiya’, *Strategiya Rossii*, No. 7, 2007, http://www.fondedin.ru/sr/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1185274651&archive=1185275035&start_from=&ucat=14& (last accessed 13 December 2013). *Strategiya Rossii* is a journal published by the fund ‘Unity in the name of Russia’ (Yedinstvo vo imiya Rossii), which is presided by Vyacheslav Nikonov and includes a number of Russia’s leading politicians on its board.

¹¹⁹ Putin, “Rossiya i meniyushchiisiya mir”.

¹²⁰ V. Putin, *Soveshchaniye poslov i postoyannykh predstavitelei Rossii, 1 iyuliya 2014*, available from www.kremlin.ru.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² V. Putin, *Obrashcheniye Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 18 marta 2014*, available from www.kremlin.ru.

¹²³ Putin, *Soveshchaniye poslov i postoyannykh predstavitelei Rossii, 1 iyuliya 2014*.

¹²⁴ Tishkov, ‘Russkii mir. Smysl i strategiya’.

linguistic and/or historical-territorial identification with Russianness. According to this conception, Russia has a role greater than that of a state. This is possible and legitimate because of Russia's civilizational heritage. *Russkii mir* allows for the Russian state to swell rather than expand, which would have imperialist connotations. In this broader sense, the state and the Russian civilization become one.¹²⁵

Russkii mir does not coexist easily with a state-centred representation of the international for one more reason. In cases when it is presented as inclusive, individuals or peoples rather than states are invited in. But the division of the world into states is secondary with respect to the important division between the Russia-centred World and the rest. Ambiguity remains with respect to the purported openness of *Russkii mir*. On one hand, the Russian World is accessible to all who feel they belong to it. On the other hand, it appears hostile towards those outside of the Russian World.

Russkii mir is a doctrine directed at the Russian audience and abroad. Its main domestic function is the legitimization of a political system.¹²⁶ The mission of restoring the Russian World becomes a useful tool for mobilizing Russian society. The promotion of the idea of the Russian World by the Kremlin has gone beyond Russia's domestic audience. The opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics in 2014, where the Russian culture and language took centre stage together with celebrations of Orthodoxy, served as symbolic validation of the idea to the outside world.¹²⁷

Russkii mir allows for the galvanisation of several key ideas about international politics, which have permeated the Russian discourse over the past two decades. Implicitly the idea encompasses elements of neoimperial and ethno-national projects, both of which have been present in the Russian discourse since the break-up of the Soviet Union.¹²⁸

Unipolarity, multipolarity

One approach, long transpiring Russian thinking on the international and contributing to or even enabling the idea of the Russian World, has been the tendency to interpret international relations in terms of competing centres of power or 'poles'. The world is perceived as divided into regional blocs, under the leadership of particular great powers. Small states (i.e. all states with the exception of great powers) cannot remain neutral but have to belong to one of the poles.¹²⁹ This idea found its reflection in numerous scholarly writings and policy statements discussing it under the overarching term of multipolarity. The understanding of multipolarity in the Russian discourse has evolved since

¹²⁵ V. Naumkin, "Tsivilizatsii i Krizis Natsii-Gosudarstv", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 13: 1, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Tcivilizatscii-i-krizis-natscii-gosudarstv-16393> (last accessed 13 December 2014).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ P. J. Goode and M. Laruelle, "Putin, Crimea and the Legitimacy Trap", *Open Democracy*, 13 March 2014, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/j-paul-goode-and-marlene-laruelle/putin-crimea-and-legitimacy-trap--nationalism> (last accessed 13 December 2014).

¹²⁸ I. Zevelyev, "Granitsy Russkogo Mira", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 13:2, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Granitsy-russkogo-mira--16582> (last accessed 13 December 2014).

¹²⁹ Potential attempts on part of great powers to pull post-Soviet states into their own political-military blocs has been presented as the most fundamental impulse for the integration of the post-Soviet space.

the end of the Cold War. It started as a concept describing a potential and expected world order not dominated by the United States. By the mid 2010s, a multipolar world came to be an objective representation of reality out there. Putin's declaration that 'the world is multipolar' has been generally shared among scholars.

Unipolarity has been the key frame used in Russia to define post-Cold War international relations. Seeing the international realm as unipolar denoted the material primacy of the US. The potentiality of the unilateral use of force was seen as the major source of instability, stimulating arms races and prompting states to acquire weapons of mass destruction.¹³⁰ Abuses of power, and as such Russia considered US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, were but examples of the dangers related to unipolarity and, in addition, illustrate the ineffectiveness of solutions involving the use of force in international relations.¹³¹

In addition to being considered a threat, unipolarity came to have a symbolic meaning. It expresses a world where Russia has been denied a proper place, from which its voice has been excluded.¹³² A unipolar world is presented as one in which:

there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day it is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself (...) And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority. Incidentally, in Russia we are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves. I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. (...) the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilization.¹³³

Similar arguments were invoked by Vladimir Putin in his March 2014 speech, following the annexation of Crimea:

After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. Key international institutions are not getting any stronger; on the contrary, in many cases, they are sadly degrading. Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against

¹³⁰ V. Putin, *Vystupleniye I Diskussiya Na Miunkhenskoj Konferentsii Po Voprosam Politiki Bezopasnosti*, 10 Fevraliya 2007, available from www.kremlin.ru.

¹³¹ V. V. Putin, "A Plea for Caution From Russia" *New York Times*, 11 September 2013.

¹³² M. Light, J. Löwenhardt, and S. White, "Russia and the dual expansion of Europe", *One Europe or Several Policy Papers*, Vol. 02/00, 2000, 12.

¹³³ V. Putin, *Wystuplenije i diskussija na Miunchienskoj konfjerencii po woprosam polityki biezopasnosti*, 10 February 2007.

sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle “If you are not with us, you are against us.” To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organisations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall. This happened in Yugoslavia (...) It was hard to believe (...) that at the end of the 20th century, one of Europe’s capitals, Belgrade, was under missile attack for several weeks (...). Was there a UN Security Council resolution on this matter? (...) And then, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the violations of the UN Security Council resolution on Libya, when instead of imposing the so-called no-fly zone over it, the bombing started.¹³⁴

The interpretation of the international provided by parts of the Russian academia does not differ in any substantial way from the one expressed by Putin above. A 2014 textbook issued under the auspices of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO, the leading academic centre for IR in Russia, argues that the international realm is guided by ‘ad hoc’ norms elaborated by the West, rather than by a set of commonly agreed international norms. The ultimate goal of the application of such ad hoc norms is the preservation of unipolarity under the primacy of the United States. The world is unable to agree on main security challenges. Ideological approaches of particular states trump on any possibility to elaborate a common view.¹³⁵

Russia’s exclusion from global decision-making processes was understood as a disregard and neglect of Russia’s interests and, as such, it was unacceptable for a former superpower.¹³⁶ Historical, geographical and geopolitical arguments were mobilized to support Russia’s claim to defining international norms.¹³⁷ Unipolarity, understood as Western domination and the West’s claim to the highest authority in international politics, was considered deeply unjust.¹³⁸ Feeling ostracized from the West, Russia constructed its own resurgence in revanchist terms, recognising the post-Cold War order as unilaterally imposed on Russia.¹³⁹ The perceived exclusion was built into the context of traditional Russian concerns: its weariness of NATO and anti-Americanism. NATO, viewed as an instrument of US foreign policy contributing to American global ascendance, was seen as forging unipolarity.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ V. Putin, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, last accessed 19 March 2014. Official English version translation altered (passive voice instead of active voice).

¹³⁵ T.A. Shakleina, and A.A. Baikov, *Megatrendy. Osnovnyye trayektorii evolutsii mirovogo poriyadka v XXI veke*, Moskva: Aspekt Press: 2014, 76-77.

¹³⁶ Putin, “*Wystuplenije i diskussija na Miunchienskoj konfierencii po woprosam polityki biezopasnosti*”, 10 February 2007.”

¹³⁷ Pavlova and Romanova, “Ideinoje Sopernichestvo Ili «Tresh-Diskurs»”.

¹³⁸ Bordachev, “Sila, Moral, Spravedlivost”.

¹³⁹ Clunan, *The social construction of Russia's resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*.

¹⁴⁰ Light, Löwenhardt, and White, “Russia and the dual expansion of Europe”, 12. NATO enlargement was interpreted as making use of Russia’s weakness and the breach of promise given by the West to Mikhail Gorbachev in return for his acquiescence to the reunification of Germany. S. Layton, “Reframing European security: Russia’s proposal for a new European security architecture”, *International Relations*, 28:1, 2014; Yu. Fedorov, *Medvedev's Initiative: A Trap for Europe*, AMO Research Paper, 2/2009.

Russia's concerns were not limited solely to the context of NATO enlargement. Despite the perception of exclusion, Russian decision-makers disregarded and mistrusted Western invitations to 'join' or 'follow' the West. Such offers were read as disrespectful, denying Russia the position of an architect of the global system and relegating it to the secondary function of a follower or executor of Europe's wishes on the international scene. The European Council's strategy on Russia of the 1999 declared:

The European Union welcomes Russia's return to its rightful place in the European family in a spirit of friendship, cooperation, fair accommodation of interests and on the foundations of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilisation.¹⁴¹

This was met with a Russian response specifically aimed at emphasizing its great power status and its right to undertake sovereign decisions on the international stage:

As a world power situated on two continents, Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its domestic and foreign policies, its status and advantages of an Euro-Asian state and the largest country of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ...¹⁴²

Unipolarity reflected the denial of Russia's proper place and the treatment of Russia as a 'defeated' power, rather than a great power and a leader of the post-Soviet region. It pushed Russia into the role of the losing side in the Cold War, one whose place in international politics would be constantly undermined by the West.¹⁴³ Russia, believing itself to occupy a 'unique place in the political scheme of the world, history and development of civilization', refused to be the 'object of civilizing influences on part of other states' and required to be treated as an equal among equals'.¹⁴⁴ Rejecting the 'pupil' metaphor in its relationship with the West, Russia presented itself as a standard-setter for other states.¹⁴⁵ The drive for equality has been mixed with the feeling of superiority over the West and the perception of Russia's 'historic mission' as separate from the West.¹⁴⁶

Multipolarity offered a convenient answer to Russia's exclusion and self-esteem problem. It was a way to place Russia at the centre-stage of international affairs and the Russian World as a polity under Russia's exclusive leadership. Under multipolarity, Russia is necessary for the world. It presents itself as 'a responsible and constructive member of international community' who

¹⁴¹ European Union, *Common strategy of the European union on Russia*, Helsinki, 4 June 1999.

¹⁴² Rossiya, *Strategiya Razvitiya Otnoshenii Rossiiskoi Federatsii S Yevropeiskim Soyuzom Na Srednesrochnuyu Perspektivu (2000-2010)*, Moskva, 1999.

¹⁴³ D. Efremenko, "Za Flazhki", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, 13: 4, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Za-flazhki-16764>.

¹⁴⁴ Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov, *Izvestia*, 25 february 2004, p.2 quoted in R. Allison, "Russia in Europe' or 'Russia and Europe'", in *Putin's Russia and the enlarged Europe*, ed. R. Allison, M. Light, and S. White (London, Oxford: Royal Institute of International Affairs Blackwell Pub., 2006), 166.

¹⁴⁵ Malinova, "Russian and 'the West' in the 2000s: redefining Russian identity in official political discourse", 84.

¹⁴⁶ Clunan, *The social construction of Russia's resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*, 111-113.

contributes to the settlement of global and regional problems.¹⁴⁷ More importantly, perhaps, it regains the right to define and frame these problems. Russia regards itself as a ‘balancer’ and a contributor to maintaining international stability, which is understood first and foremost in terms of limiting the use of force by the West without Russia’s consent and protecting sovereignty as the highest value.

Unsurprisingly, the idea of multipolarity acquired a prominent place in academic and policy discourse in Russia.¹⁴⁸ The concept’s origins are attributed to Russian scholar-turned-politician Yevgeny Primakov and questions he raised while serving as Russia’s Foreign Minister in mid-1990s. Multipolarity re-emerged in the official discourse with particular frequency, following the West’s interventions in the Balkans in the late 1990s:

Multipolarity is an obvious choice since it makes Russia’s quest for great power status possible. A multipolar world is where Russia would be viewed as a partner rather than a client of the West and, together with India and China, could counterbalance American hegemony.¹⁴⁹

Russia’s Military Doctrine of the year 2000 embraced multipolarity in a specific way. Among threats to national security it identified: ‘attempts to ignore (infringe) the Russian Federation’s interests in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as one influential centre in a multipolar world’.¹⁵⁰ Multipolarity was elevated to the level of official doctrine, which could serve as ‘an alternative to Western hegemony’.¹⁵¹ The multipolar world has become the central idea for Russian political class: ‘In 2007 in Munich Putin declared he would not play the game if the rules were established without Russia. The Customs Union was thought to be good enough to be the centre of the new pole’.¹⁵² Putin went so far as to recognize the multipolarity as a sui generis ‘law of nature’, depicting the attempts to maintain unipolarity as incompatible with ‘diversity, given by God and nature’.¹⁵³

Towards the end of the 2000s, Russia declared the twilight of unipolarity and the transition to multipolarity. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept described multipolarity as an ‘emerging’

¹⁴⁷ ROSSIYA, "Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi Federatsii, utwierzhdena prezidentom Rossiyskoi Federatsii V. V. Putiny 12 fevraliya 2013 g."

¹⁴⁸ A. Makarychev and V. Morozov, "Multilateralism, Multipolarity, and Beyond: A Menu of Russia's Policy Strategies", *Global Governance*, 17: 3, 2011; Makarychev and Morozov, "Is "Non-Western Theory" Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR"; Light, Löwenhardt, and White, "Russia and the dual expansion of Europe", 12; Achkasov and Gutorov, eds., *Politologiya*.

¹⁴⁹ Dr Konstantin Khudoley, Head of European Studies Department, School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, guest lecture "Understanding Russia's Foreign Policy", 27.02.2014 Aberystwyth University.

¹⁵⁰ First officially published in the April 22, 2000 issue of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. Translation available on-line <http://igcc.ucsd.edu/assets/001/502378.pdf> (last accessed 18 February 2014).

¹⁵¹ Makarychev and Morozov, "Is "Non-Western Theory" Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR": 345.

¹⁵² Dr Konstantin Khudoley, Head of European Studies Department, School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, guest lecture "Understanding Russia's Foreign Policy", 27.02.2014, Aberystwyth University.

¹⁵³ *Zasedaniye mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba «Valdai»*, 19 September 2013, <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19243>.

phenomenon.¹⁵⁴ In 2008, following the Russia-Georgia war, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the unipolar world ceased to exist as a result of Russia's military victory over Georgia. The global economic crisis of 2008 strengthened the perception of the waning of unipolarity. The political establishment and significant parts of Russian academia started perceiving the declining influence of the 'historical West' as an opportunity for Russia's greater inclusion.¹⁵⁵ Reflexions went beyond the material conception of Western power and pointed to the opening up of the ideational space:

For the first time in many years, a real competitive environment has emerged on the market of ideas [between different] value systems and development models (...) the West is losing its monopoly on the globalization process¹⁵⁶

The foreign policy decree, signed by Vladimir Putin following his inauguration for a third presidential term in 2012, instructed the Foreign Ministry to implement a foreign policy 'under the conditions of an emerging new, polycentric system of international relations',¹⁵⁷ a formula repeated in the 2013 Foreign Policy Doctrine.¹⁵⁸ Putin additionally declared: 'We cannot change the logic of global political and economic development. As I said, the world is multipolar.'¹⁵⁹ Russia regarded these changes as the opportunity to 'break out of the subordinate development paradigm, in which it has been since the Soviet Union's break-up, and to return to the world stage as a co-manager of the new world order'.¹⁶⁰ In that way, multipolarity – with power centres separated from each other – emerged as a necessary condition for the Russian World to come into being. Since regional blocs were supposed to constitute the sinews of the new architecture of international politics, the role of Eurasian integration as one of Russia's contributions to the creation of a multipolar international order was repeatedly underlined in Russian official discourse.¹⁶¹ Multipolarity evolved from an academic concept into a policy goal. In the crude manoeuvre of reification, world politics made a quick transition from viewing multipolarity as a goal to declaring it a fact of being.

The international as the realm of competition and confrontation

The combination of the distinctiveness of the Russian World, the conviction of Russia's moral superiority and the perception of being threatened by the West, are all underpinned by the view of the international as the realm of competition and confrontation. For Russia, developments unfolding over

¹⁵⁴ ROSSIYA, *Kontseptsiiya vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi Federatsii, utwierzhdena prezidentom D. A. Miedwiediewym 12 iyuliya 2008 g.*, 2008 available from www.mid.ru.

¹⁵⁵ Dr Konstantin Khudoley, Head of European Studies Department, School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, guest lecture "Understanding Russia's Foreign Policy", 27.02.2014 Aberystwyth University.

¹⁵⁶ S. Lavrov, *Speech before the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy of the Russian Federation*, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ P. R. ROSSIYA, *Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 7 maia 2012 g. N 605 "O merakh po realizatsii vneshnepoliticheskogo kursa Rossiiskoi Federatsii"*, Moskva, 2012.

¹⁵⁸ See also: Makarychev and Morozov, "Is 'Non-Western Theory' Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR": 340.

¹⁵⁹ V. Putin, *St Petersburg International Economic Forum*, 23 May 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7230>.

¹⁶⁰ Maxim Bratersky, *The Transformation of Russia's Foreign Policy*, 7 June 2014, Russia in Global Affairs, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Transformation-of-Russias-Foreign-Policy--16706>.

¹⁶¹ S. Lavrov, "Vneshnepoliticheskaya Filosofiya Rossii", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* '3, 2013.

the two decades following the Cold War suggest a replacement of the East-West ideological confrontation with a ‘geopolitical’ one between Russia and the West. Since Russia and West are represented as geopolitical rivals, this only contributes to the perception of the West as a threat.¹⁶² Consequently, the concept of victory (*pobeda*), which is key for Russian national narrative, features prominently in the thinking about the international.

For those parts of the Russian elite who perceived the international realm in terms of confrontation and competition, geopolitics turned out to be a useful explanatory tool. Geopolitics has marked Russian writing about international relations since the break-up of the USSR. Characterised by concepts of national interest and spheres of influence, it has been present in academic, policy and popular discourses. While generally interpreted in terms of international competition or a zero-sum game, discursive struggles over the meaning of geopolitics have been common.¹⁶³ For instance, geopolitics understood as a ‘balanced, non-ideological assessment of Russia’s national interests’ was first officially articulated by Russia’s first foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev in early 1990s. Considered ‘pragmatic’ and ‘objective’, at that time it was deliberately contrasted with ‘ideologised’ Soviet foreign policy.¹⁶⁴ This approach was premised on a rather artificial distinction between a policy that can be either ideology-permeated or interest-driven. Over time nationalistic concerns about Russia’s ‘territorial integrity’ have been incorporated under the ‘geopolitics’ label. Political elites during Yeltsin’s presidency used geopolitics to win over nationalist voters’ support.¹⁶⁵ Geopolitics began to be perceived as a remedy for Russia’s foreign-policy identity crisis. It was expected to provide a new way of interpreting the international, following the fiasco of Soviet ideology.¹⁶⁶ Contemporary literature oriented at popular readership presents geopolitics in terms of quasi-mechanical forces and regards historical events as ‘proofs’ of the laws of geopolitics operating in the world.¹⁶⁷

Questions posed within the framework of geopolitics ask how Russia is to preserve its territorial integrity and enhance its international standing.¹⁶⁸ Although before the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the aim of Russian territorial expansion was thought of as unlikely, territorial gains are very much a

¹⁶² Note that similar representations are found in American textbooks : ‘East and West were still geopolitical rivals in the former republics of the Soviet Union, particularly in Georgia and Ukraine, where pro-Western leaders came to power in early 2003 and late 2004. Would their countries be allowed to join NATO and maintain NATO bases on what had formerly been Soviet territory?’. M. Donald Hancock (ed.), *Politics in Europe*, 5th edition, 2012.

¹⁶³ Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”: 668.

¹⁶⁴ Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”: 671.

¹⁶⁵ Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”: 669.

¹⁶⁶ A. Astrov and N. Morozova, “Russia: geopolitics from the heartland”, in *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, ed. S. Guzzini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 194-198.

¹⁶⁷ What is also characteristic of this type of literature, is the stress on continuous struggle, realization, rather than possible acceptance of common interests : ‘We are Russia, a land empire, while our rivals are the empires of the sea. We border China, the main rival of the Anglo-Saxons ... Whatever steps the Anglo-Saxons take on the world stage, these need to be analysed from a geopolitical point of view’. N. Starikov, *Geopolitika. Kak eto delayetsya*, Sankt-Petersburg: Piter 2013, 341-350, 363-364.

¹⁶⁸ Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”: 667.

feature of geopolitical thinking. Geopolitics looks at the world through the prism of territorial acquisition or, when that is impossible, the preservation of spheres of interest.¹⁶⁹ The characterisation of the Central-Eastern European states as forming the '*cordon sanitaire*', separating the 'old Europe' from Russia and the perception of the EU in geopolitical terms, gains in popularity.¹⁷⁰

Despite the powerful message of Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and its proclaimed opening to the world, the representation of the international as the site of competition and confrontation has increased since the late 1990s. It was to be found in the rhetoric of Russia's leaders as well as in foreign policy and national security concepts. In 2006, Vladimir Putin stressed that the potential for conflict had steadily increased.¹⁷¹ He reinforced this diagnosis several years later, underlining that old sources of rivalry persist and new ones appear.¹⁷² Key documents pointed to the increasing rivalry among power centres.¹⁷³ The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept accentuates this on-going competition in world politics:

The current stage of the world development is characterized by profound changes in the geopolitical landscape largely provoked or accelerated by the global financial and economic crisis. (...) For the first time in modern history, *global competition* takes place on a civilizational level, whereby various values and models of development based on the universal principles of democracy and market economy start to clash and compete against each other. Cultural and civilizational diversity of the world becomes more and more manifest. (...) emphasis on civilizational identity. Desire to go back to one's civilizational roots (...) Increased *competition* for strategic resources.¹⁷⁴

The scholarly world has also drawn extensively from geopolitics in order to account for developments taking place between Russia and the West. The post-Soviet space is interpreted as an object of 'geopolitical bargaining' between Western states and Russia.¹⁷⁵ Since the Ukrainian crisis, the interpretation of the international realm in confrontational terms has increased. Confrontation with the US, or the West, is perceived as the defining feature of the international realm. Washington is seen as trying to defend its position in the world but the stakes are higher for Russia as the outcome of this confrontation will define Russia's place in the world. Losing such a conflict would inevitably

¹⁶⁹ For an English language discussion of the term geopolitics, see: S. Guzzini, ed., *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁷⁰ Efremenko, "Za Flazhki".

¹⁷¹ Putin, *Wystuplenije na sowieszczanii s poslami i postojannymi predstaviteliami Rossijskoj Federacii*, 27 iyuniya 2006

¹⁷² Putin, *Soveshchaniye poslov i postoyannykh predstavitelei Rossii*, 1 iyuliya 2014.

¹⁷³ ROSSIYA, "Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi Federatsii, utwierzhdena prezidentom D. A. Miedwiediewym 12 iyuliya 2008 g."

¹⁷⁴ *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁵ Irina A. Vasilenko, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika*, 318-319.

mean Russia has lost its position of a ‘pole’ in international politics.¹⁷⁶ Competition in the international realm is regarded as transcending state borders. Both the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Maidan revolution in 2014 were interpreted in Russia as instances of geopolitical rivalry, a global competition for spheres of influence.¹⁷⁷ Moscow views a string of recent popular uprisings, starting with the so-called Colour Revolutions of the early 2000s, the Arab Spring Revolutions and the toppling of the Moscow-backed government of Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine, as sponsored and encouraged by the United States.¹⁷⁸ Russian discourse accuses Western states of hypocrisy. In Russian eyes, the West only creates the impression that the period of ‘spheres of influence’ ended, while de facto it continues to broaden its own sphere of interest and denies this right to other powers, including Russia.¹⁷⁹ This confrontation includes the imposition of the West’s cultural code under the guise of ‘universal values’.¹⁸⁰

Imagining the international in terms of competition and confrontation influences Russian approach to security. Security provision becomes associated with preventing Western involvement and ensuring protection against the West. Security is understood primarily in strategic terms, with particular focus on territory and material capability, both guaranteeing the state’s survival. This logic allows the claim that security increases through territorial expansion. Russian scholarship and policy view the security of individuals and communities as relying upon the strength of the state.

The portrayal of the international in terms of competition and confrontation does not exclude a degree of discursively emphasised conciliatory approach. For instance in a 2014 presidential address Putin emphasized:

Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for our relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps.¹⁸¹

Equality has been emphasised as the condition for dialogue, but equality understood in a specific way. It is not the equality of sovereign statehood symbolised by the UN membership but Russia’s equality with other great powers, or the West.

Western-oriented view of the international?

Despite its name, the Russian World is an idea that in a multitude ways is oriented towards the West. It is a view of the international that Russia considers dominated by the West. Despite the overt

¹⁷⁶ Karaganov, ‘Rossiya-SShA: dolgoye protivostoyaniye’, *Rossiya v globalnoi politike*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2014, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Rossiya--SShA-dolgoe-protivostoyanie-16923>.

¹⁷⁷ Efremenko, “Za flazhki”.

¹⁷⁸ V. Putin, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, last accessed 19 March 2014.

¹⁷⁹ Sergei Karaganov, “Rossiya-SShA: dolgoye protivostoyaniye”.

¹⁸⁰ Kosachev, “Ne Rybu, a Udochku”.

¹⁸¹ V. Putin, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, last accessed 19 March 2014.

Russocentrism of this concept, relations with the West constitute the primary frame of reference.¹⁸² This paradoxical reliance on the West in constructing the view of the international is in a way an extension of the Russian identity debate. Many Russians would consider themselves to be European and would simultaneously subscribe to the view that Russia is in competition with Europe. Russia has long been depicted as part of Europe, but a part that emerged outside the framework of the social, political and cultural life of the West. Underscoring the distinction between 'the West' and 'Europe', Russian discourse has been able to reconcile the opposition towards Western political values with a sense of belonging to Europe.¹⁸³

Russia's ideas about international politics tend to be described as reactive, i.e. in response to policies of the West.¹⁸⁴ Russia either aspires to be part of the West, or leaves it.¹⁸⁵ But even if Russia positions itself outside of the West, the West as an audience plays an important role in how Russia constructs the perception of the international and of the self within it.¹⁸⁶

Russia's perception of the West, in turn, is not uniform and often becomes contradictory. On the one hand, the Russian elite regards the West as in decline, primarily due to military failures in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the global economic crisis of the late 2000s. On the other hand, the West is conceptualised as the main threat for Russia despite Russia's increased self-confidence.¹⁸⁷ This approach towards the West is yet another reflection of the simultaneous feeling of superiority and inferiority which is fundamental to Russia's depictions of the international realm. Feeling entitled to a partnership with the West, Russia implicitly acknowledges the West's role as the key international audience, the one expected to acknowledge Russia's privileged status.

Conclusion: the Russian World and implications for the idea of international society

This chapter asked about the main elements and sources of the representation of the international in Russia. I argued that several factors underpin Russia's perception of the international, such as: a

¹⁸² Mankoff, *Russian foreign policy: the return of great power politics*, 16. Russia and its civilizational debate also contributed to the construction of the West, an argument developed in detail by Peggy Heller. P. Heller, "The Russian Dawn. How Russia Contributed to the Emergence of 'the West' as a Concept," in *The Struggle for the West: A Divided and Contested Legacy*, ed. C. Browning and M. Lehti (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁸³ Russian political discourse has considered three branches of the European civilization (Lavrov). The idea of a 'Greater Europe', now overshadowed by the Russian World, represented the outcome of this uneasy reunion, in which Russia, along with post-Soviet states, comprised the Eastern pillar of Europe, next to the European Union and the US. S. Karaganov, "Soyuz Yevropy: posledniy shans?" *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 9.07.2010 2010; S. Karaganov, "The magic numbers of 2009", *Russia in Global Affairs*: 2, 2009; T. Bordachev, "Toward a Strategic Alliance", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4: 2, 2006.

¹⁸⁴ D. Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not of Influence", *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:4, 2009, 15. See also a much earlier observation by Isaiah Berlin. M. Raeff and I. Berlin, *Russian intellectual history: an anthology*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World 1966.

¹⁸⁵ Trenin claims, for instance, that Russia 'left the West' in the 2000s. D. Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West", *Foreign Affairs*, 85:4, 2006.

¹⁸⁶ D. Trenin, "Russia Redefines Itself and Its Relations with the West", *The Washington Quarterly*, 30: 2, 2007.

¹⁸⁷ A. Monaghan, "An enemy at the gates' or 'from victory to victory'? Russian foreign policy", *International Affairs*, 84:4 2008.

distinct interpretation of history; the feeling of exclusion; the reluctance to play by someone else's rules and the claim to great power status. These factors have fuelled a confrontational rather than co-operative view of the international realm and prompted the galvanization of the idea of the Russian World.

Despite the fact that towards the mid-2010s the interpretation of the international in terms of a *Russkii mir* took a more consolidated shape, the idea continues to encompass different and even antithetical visions and approaches. Competition with the West is accompanied by treating the West as the main audience. The West, seen as the greatest threat, is simultaneously perceived as in decline and of lesser moral standing. As a result Russia becomes both superior and inferior to the West. Russia's views of self intermingle greatness and exclusion, triumphalism and victimhood. There are, however, several fundamental features uniting these dichotomous elements. The first is egotism. Policy and academic discourse presents the international in such a way as to, first, expose Russia's place in it and, second, enhance Russia's international standing. The Russian World is a representation professed on a polycentric model of the world, where civilizational identities play a major role. While the language of geopolitics and competition between poles may seem permeated by neo-realism, this representation of the international has to be considered against the backdrop of Russian multifaceted identity and civilizational debate. The confrontational representation of the international facilitates and legitimizes the need for the Russian World. The Russian World and multipolarity are mutually indispensable.

These features of Russia's view of the international make it impossible to approach international society as a framework where Russia could be fitted in or as a scholarly tool facilitating comprehension. An attempt at comparing the visions could be made for instance by analysing how Russia positions itself with respect to classical building blocks of international society, such as: the state; international law; and diplomacy. Importantly, however, these elements, while resurfacing in Russian discourse, acquire specific meanings. They do not come together in a way the English School sees them coalescing. Despite the fact that the international society perspective takes for granted the common understanding of terms it uses to describe the international, Russia accords them different and far from fixed meaning. The state, diplomacy and international law are terms used in various ways to fit in the discourse of a state feeling both in the very centre and on the margins of international politics. *Russkii mir*, extending beyond the borders of the Russian state, does not sit easily with the state-centred discourse of international society. The perception of the West as a permanent threat is difficult to reconcile with the idea of international society based on some degree of commonality of interests and cooperation. Russia's interpretation of the international cannot be

easily reconciled with Manning's optimistic supposition: 'Probably we, most of us, have our personal mental pictures of an international society in enjoyment of more or less permanent peace'.¹⁸⁸

There are, however, a number of similarities in the way the Russian World and international society have been thought of. Russia's image of the international is value-laden and normatively underpinned, just as the English School concept of international society is primarily animated by liberal ideas. The idea of *Russkii mir* filled the void left by the 1990s officially endorsed denial of ideology in Russia's foreign policy.¹⁸⁹ The Russocentric view of the international exposed by *Russkii mir* is analogous to the Eurocentricity of international society narrative, placing liberal states at the hub of an international order where they themselves play the role of rule setters and those responsible for the maintenance of *communal* interstate cohesion.

¹⁸⁸ C.A.W. Manning, *Peaceful change: an international problem*, London: Macmillan: 1937, 190.

¹⁸⁹ Political elites throughout 1990s claimed a purposeful retreat from ideological thinking about international relations towards pragmatism and interest-based foreign policy. The attitude towards possible utilitarian aspects of ideology changed in the 2000s, the lack of ideology came to be seen as an obstacle in regaining the great power status. While Vladimir Putin's presidency started with the affirmation of pragmatism, regarded as the explicit opposite to ideology, the improved economic situation of the mid 2000s, prompted the search for a moral dimension which could be 'added' to foreign policy. Morozova, "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin": 670.

CHAPTER 5 Russia: the state in Russia's representation of the international

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the links between Russian scholarly and policy representations of the international and the state. It asks how does the idea of the Russian World, and the currents feeding into it, influence conceptualizations and policies with regard to the state. It argues that the image of the international produced in Russia requires a conception of Russia greater than a state. The specific representation of the international reinforces the thinking of Russia as a strong state and justifies policy practices towards other post-Soviet states, such as unequal regional integration, aid without institution-building and maintaining control through practices of intervention. Unlike in the case of Western-led statebuilding, where a specific state model is well articulated, it is impossible to find a model of a state that Russian discourse would be promoting, forging or enforcing in the post-Soviet area. The idea of the Russian World facilitates the portrayal of Russia as a polity greater than a state and helps legitimize its political disregard for the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states. Russia scholarly and policy discourse does not engage in any precise elaboration of requirements for the right kind of state in terms of institutions or standards underpinning it.

In arguing that scholarly and policy discursive representations of the international have a bearing on concepts and policies towards a state, I acknowledge that this relation is by no means one-directional. By placing emphasis on the connection from the representation of the international to the state, I wish to supplement analyses attributing Russian foreign policy action directly to a specific organisation of Russia's domestic political system.¹ Several landmark studies have been devoted to discerning links between Russia's identity and its international behaviour.² But while they all provide important arguments for Russia's national self-image influencing its foreign policy orientation, they remain silent on the way Russian representations of the international inform conceptualization and policies with regard

¹ Such analyses focus on the way Russia seeks to resist democratization internationally in order to preserve its autocratic political system. T. Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*, Aldershot: Ashgate: 2009.

² Hopf, *Social construction of international politics: identities & foreign policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*; Clunan, *The social construction of Russia's resurgence: aspirations, identity, and security interests*; T. Dunne, L. Hansen, and C. Wight, "The end of International Relations theory?", *European Journal of International Relations*, 19: 3, 2013.

to the state. In this analysis I take into account the Russian state and other post-Soviet states, with particular reference to Kyrgyzstan.

The chapter opens with an overview of Western approaches to the Russian state and suggests that it is valuable to pay attention to ideas stemming from Russia. Russian discourse remains dominated by the notion of a strong state. The understanding of such a state is interconnected with a specific vision of the international, one where Russia needs to be strong to counterbalance and to be ready to confront other centres of power. The second part discusses policies for securing such a strong Russia.

The Russian state

Western scholarly assessments of the Russian state are dominated by the application of a socio-political transformation lens. The Russian state has been interpreted as a work-in-progress endeavour geared towards the attainment of the sole legitimate model of state – a liberal democracy. Most of the time, therefore, Russia's statebuilding efforts were deemed unsuccessful. With the use of such concepts as: 'pre-modern state-building', 'hybrid regime' or 'grey zone' scholars attempted to explain the dynamics of state formation in Russia.³ The most critical analyses go as far as to suggest considering the Russian Federation below the 'stateness' threshold.⁴ Western literature described the Russian state as networked authoritarianism where power is diffused among the ruling elite. Authors emphasise the private-corporate nature of state power and the failure of Putin's centralization efforts.⁵ *Sistema* – a web of informal networks – is said to undermine the hierarchical vertical of power.⁶ The political system in Russia is viewed as 'weak authoritarianism',⁷ in need of 'manual control'.⁸

³ Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*; T. Carothers, "The end of the transition paradigm", *Journal of Democracy*, 13: 1, 2002.

⁴ O. Cappelli, "Pre-modern state-building in post-Soviet Russia", *Journal of communist studies and transition politics*, 24: 4, 2008.

⁵ S. A. Greene, "How Much Can Russia Really Change? The Durability of Networked Authoritarianism", *PONARS Policy Memo*, Vol. No. 194, 2012.

⁶ V. Putin, *Obrashcheniye Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 4 sentiyabriya 2004*, Moskva, Kreml, 2004, 4 sentiyabriya, available from <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/09/76320.shtml>; D. Orlov, "The New Russian Age and Sovereign Democracy", *Russian Politics and Law*, 46: 5, 2008.

⁷ P. Hanson, "Networks, Cronies and Business Plans: Business-State Relations in Russia", in *Russia as a Network State. What Works in Russia When State Institutions Do Not?*, ed. Vadim Kononenko and Arkady Moshes (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); S. E. Hanson, "The Uncertain Future of Russia's Weak State Authoritarianism", *East European Politics & Societies*, 21: 1 2007.

⁸ Zagladin, "Natsionalno-tsivilizatsionnaya identichnost Rossii: istoriya i sovremennost".

Russia is mindful of these analyses and, given that the West is an important audience and a reference point, the Russian scholarly and policy worlds pay attention to how Russia is perceived abroad. Contemporary Russian discourse recognizes the challenge of defining Russia's image as a state. There is a perception of Russia as not fitting the *prevalent* model.⁹ Simultaneously, the elite has become more and more outspoken in its renunciation of the Western standard related to political organisation and the system of government, in particular the good governance state, which is eagerly described as just a label with little substance.¹⁰ This rejection, however, does not mean that an alternative vision of a state model and international statebuilding has been clearly articulated.

If we exclude opulent debates regarding Russian identity, which focus on culture to the disregard of institutions, contemporary Russian scholarly literature appears not to engage in a thorough discussion of the question of what sort of a state Russia is or strives to become.¹¹ The political system in Russia is mostly discussed in terms of its historical development and readers are left to draw their own conclusions, particularly if they look for assessments regarding the contemporary Russian state.¹² The legitimacy of the Russian state is explained on the basis of policies pursued by particular leaders rather than the construction of state institutions.¹³ Moreover, state institutions 'imported' from the West are often considered to be in contradiction to Russian political culture.¹⁴

There is an exception to the general lack of interest or lack of opportunities to engage with the topic of state institutions in Russia. Scholarly legal writing is productive in that regard but it also remains uncritical. Interested in the liberal state model it stresses the government's subordination to law, first and foremost the Russian constitution. The concept of a strong state is usually associated with the rule of law (*printsip verkhovenstva prava*), juridical independence, the primacy of human rights and the development of civil society. The political-legal construction of the Russian state is not seen as substantially different from that of Western states.¹⁵ Even those authors who see certain deficiencies in the

⁹ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

¹⁰ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

¹¹ An exception is a monograph by S. N. Baburin, *Mir imperii: territoriya gosudarstva i mirovoi poriyadok*, Moskva: Magistr Infra-M, 2010.

¹² R.T. Muchaev, *Teoriya gosudarstva i prava*, 2014; interviews, Moscow, February 2015.

¹³ B. I. Isayev and N. A. Baranov, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika: uchebnoye posobiye*, Sankt-Petersburg: Piter: 2013, 48-54.

¹⁴ B. I. Isayev and N. A. Baranov, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika: uchebnoye posobiye*, Sankt-Petersburg: Piter: 2013, 164-165.

¹⁵ T. N. Mikheeva, "O printsipe verkhovenstva prava na sovremennom etape razvitiya gosudarstva", *Zakon i pravo*: 9, 2013; A. L. Mironov, "Sootnosheniye poniyatii "gosudarstvennoye upravleniye" i "ispolnitelnaya

implementation of Russian law, emphasize that the model or idea of the state remains the same as the one encapsulated in modern Western constitutionalism.¹⁶ The relationship between particular elements of the political system is deemed to resemble solutions predominant in the West.¹⁷ Political discourse, in turn, underlines the indispensability of the strong Russian state.

The evolving vision of a strong state

The idea of a ‘strong state’ is inherently connected to the Russian representation of the international. It is important to start this discussion with the analysis of what exactly a strong state means in Russian discourse and how the term evolved against the backdrop of political changes Russia has undergone following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The emergence of a new entity, the Russian Federation, in the early 1990s, exacerbated dilemmas related to Russian identity and institutional arrangements, which both suffered considerable damage. The Russian elite was forced to reinvent the state – institutionally and ideationally. Tensions emerged between the idea of an empire, the nation-state and a civilisation, which were additionally complicated by debates regarding Russia’s place in the world.¹⁸ Developments that took place during Boris Yeltsin’s presidency between 1991 and 1999, and most importantly the 1993 constitution (*Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*), provided legal foundations for the new state. But, while the legal construction followed the Western model of constitutionalism, efficient and legitimate state institutions were not quick to emerge. The coercive capacity of the new state was limited and the Russian state was unable to retain the monopoly on the use of violence. Towards the end of the 1990s, the Russian state was deprived of authority, understood as the ability to create a set of rules for non-state actors.¹⁹ It evolved into a polity with two different sets of rules: public ones, governed by formal institutions and fundamental constitutional laws, and informal ones,

vlast'”, *Zakon i pravo*: 9, 2013; V. D. Perevalov, *Teoriya gosudarstva i prava*, 3-e izdaniye, ispravlennoye i dopolnennoye ed., Moskva: Yurait: 2013; Kharkhordin, *Main concepts of Russian politics*.

¹⁶ M. A. Riekkinen, “Mezhdunarodnyye standardy uchastiya grazhdan v upravlenii delami gosudarstva”, *Moskovskii zhurnal mezhdunarodnogo prava*: 2, 2011; Kharkhordin, *Main concepts of Russian politics*.

¹⁷ L. A. Nudnenko, “Pravovyye garantii parlamentskoi oppozitsionnoi deyatel'nosti v Gosudarstvennoi Dume Federal'nogo Sobraniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii”, *Gosudarstvo i pravo*: 8, 2011.

¹⁸ R. Sakwa, “The problem of ‘the international’ in Russian identity formation”, *International Politics*, 49: 4, 2012; T. Uyama, *Asiatic Russia: imperial power in regional and international contexts*, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge: 2012; A. P. Tsygankov, *Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity*, Third edition ed., Lanham, MD; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield: 2013.

¹⁹ B. D. Taylor, *State building in Putin's Russia: policing and coercion after communism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2011; R. Sakwa, *The crisis of Russian democracy: the dual state, factionalism, and the Medvedev succession*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2011.

controlled by the 'administrative regime'.²⁰ The inheritance of this dual construction constituted the baseline for Vladimir Putin's rule.

Vladimir Putin placed the idea of re-building the Russian state at the core of Russian politics. From the very beginning of his presidency, the concept of a strong state stood out as the dominant current in the official discourse.²¹ In the first presidential manifesto of December 1999, Vladimir Putin presented his vision of the Russian state. The central tenet was the need to 'restore' the statehood weakened following the fall of the Soviet Union and the turmoil of the 1990s. This was to be accomplished by establishing a 'power vertical' (*vertical vlasti*), supposed to increase the efficiency of the Russian state. Stressing the need for strong state authority (*silnaya gosudarstvennaya vlast'*), Putin related it to democratic procedures, rule of law and federalism.²² A series of reforms were outlined to bring about this vision of the strong state ideal: the creation of a more efficient administrative structure and competent cadres, juridical reform, the development of policies strengthening civil society.²³ In this initial representation, the strength of the state was equated with impartiality and effectiveness of its institutions, and the application of law for which Putin coined an interesting term, the 'dictatorship of law' (*diktatura zakona*).²⁴ The state's autonomy from other domestic actors, such as big business and federal subjects, constituted another element of Putin's idea for a strong Russian state. Despite heavy emphasis on the guiding role of the executive, the goal was not to create a state apparatus that would prevail over particular societal actors but to stimulate conditions for their independent development:

Russia needs a strong state power and must have it. I am not calling for totalitarianism.

History proves all dictatorships, all authoritarian forms of government are transient.

Only democratic systems are intransient. Whatever the shortcomings, mankind has not

²⁰ The administrative regime is understood as a network of social relations, with political and economic power entwined in factional politics and, at the same time, an actor in the political process. R. Smyth, A. Lowry, and B. Wilkenning, "Engineering victory: Institutional reform, informal institutions, and the formation of a hegemonic party regime in the Russian Federation", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 23: 2, 2007; R. Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy. The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Succession*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press: 2011.

²¹ Taylor, *State building in Putin's Russia: policing and coercion after communism*, 15. Scholars of Russian political culture tend to see the authoritarian traditions as deeply embedded in Russian society: Isayev and Baranov, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika: uchebnoye posobiye*, 196-197. See also V. B. Kobeikin, *Gosudarstvennoye stroitelstvo i modeli gosudarstva*, Omsk 2000.

²² V. Putin, "Rossiya Na Rubezhe Tysiyachelei", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 dekabriya 1999, http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html. For a detailed analysis of this speech, see: A. B. Evans, "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60: 6, 2008; Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*.

²³ Putin, "Rossiya Na Rubezhe Tysiyachelei"

²⁴ See also Taylor, *State building in Putin's Russia: policing and coercion after communism*, 2.

devised anything superior. A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, workable federative state.²⁵

The official rhetoric presented a strong state in positive light, as an entity desired by the people and capable of bringing order:

For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly to fight against. On the contrary, it is the source and guarantor of order, the initiator and the main driving force of any change.... Society desires the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state.²⁶

Russian academia seemed in agreement with the official line and described Putin's first two presidential terms as the period of the 'strengthening of statehood'.²⁷ Although the concept of good governance was not included in the official notion of the strong Russian state, the emphasis on state quality was implicit in Putin's early pronouncements. These early representations of a strong state attempted to reconcile coercive capacity with state effectiveness, to combine the *Western model* with *Russian characteristics*. The representation of the international as the realm where primarily great powers mattered was conducive to the perception of a strong state as a necessary step on the way to regaining the great power status for Russia. Such strong state was to be achieved in close economic co-operation with the European Union and the 'strategic partnership' with the US, inaugurated in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.²⁸

The meanings attached to a strong state started changing incrementally in the mid-2000s and should be linked more directly to the evolution of Russia's portrayal of the international realm. Russian representation of the international was becoming increasingly dominated by the belief in an inherent competition and confrontation among great powers and the portrayal of the West as unwilling to recognize Russia's equal status. Multipolarity came to be presented as a natural state of international politics and was expected to *return* following the brief period of *unnatural* predominance of the United States. The official discourse linked the strength of the Russian state more and more explicitly to Russia's international performance, its status as a great power and the West's peer. Russia's ruling elite perceived state strength as a necessary condition for Russia to be reckoned with internationally: 'Russia is only respected and has its interests considered when the country is strong and stands firmly on its

²⁵ Putin, "Rossiya Na Rubezhe Tysiyacheletei".

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ N. M. Alexandrov, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika. Tekst lektsii*, Yaroslavl: YarGU: 2014, 42-48.

²⁸ Tsygankov, *Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity*.

own feet' (*Rossiye vosprinimayut s uvazheniyem, schitayutsiya s nei tol'ko togda, kogda ona sil'na i tverdo stoit na nogakh*).²⁹ Along with material resurgence of the early 2000s, the metaphor of Russia 'rising up from its knees' (*Rossiya vstala s kolen*) and Russia's independent international standing (*Rossiya s sil'nyim, ustoichivym suverenitetom*) became the sinews of Russia's high international status.³⁰ The Russian academic world generally reiterated these ideas. Even textbooks on contemporary Russian politics, for instance one by Isayev and Baranov, made a direct link between the international and the domestic and called for securing Russia's 'great power' (*velikaya derzhava*) aspirations.³¹

The Russian elite believed that the external world would reckon with Russia only if Russia was one of the 'building blocks' in what was perceived as the emerging multipolar international order. This influenced the understanding of the type of political entity Russia needed to become. The goal of creating Russia as a strong international actor was intertwined with defining the global order as multipolar. The concept of a 'sovereign democracy', which entered the Russian political discourse in the mid 2000s, was but one reflection of these goals.³² It denoted not so much to the political system in Russia but to the state's independent position on the international stage.

The discursive construction of Russia as in danger surfaced as an equally important element of the official discourse.³³ Speaking of the 'enemy at the gates' coalesced with the depiction of the international realm as the area of competition and confrontation. The strength of the Russian state became increasingly associated with its ability to defend itself from a number of threats stemming from outside the state. Putin's speech delivered in the aftermath of the Beslan siege in 2004 is a clear illustration of the beginnings of this trend. Putin explained that the Russian state had not reacted adequately to processes taking place globally and 'demonstrated weakness' in the world where 'the weak get beaten'.³⁴

The period of Dmitri Medvedev's presidency and Vladimir Putin's premiership, 2008-2012, was accompanied by contradictory rhetoric regarding the strong state. Medvedev,

²⁹ Putin, "Rossiya i meniyushchiisiya mir". The official English-language translation can be found at: <http://valdaiclub.com/politics/39300.html>.

³⁰ Putin, "Obrashcheniye Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 18 marta 2014."

³¹ Isayev and Baranov, *Sovremennaya rossiiskaya politika: uchebnoye posobiye*, 167.

³² For a broader discussion on the 'sovereign democracy', see: D. Averde, "'Sovereign Democracy" and Russia's relations with the European Union", *Demokratizatsiya: the Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 15: 2, 2007; A. S. Makarychev, "Russia's search for international identity through the sovereign democracy concept", *The International Spectator*, 43: 2, 2008; Orlov, "The New Russian Age and Sovereign Democracy".

³³ For a detailed analysis, see Monaghan, "'An enemy at the gates' or 'from victory to victory'? Russian foreign policy".

³⁴ Putin, "Obrashcheniye Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 4 sentiyabriya 2004."

calling for an overarching modernization, described Russia as ineffective state machinery with outdated economy. Putin continued to promote his vision of a state that needed to be strong to counter external and domestic threats.³⁵

Two developments, one international and the other domestic, were exploited with the view to validate Putin's narrative in the eyes of the Russian ruling elite and the population at large. The first was the wave of the Arab Spring revolutions, commencing in 2011. These events were interpreted by the Russian elite as a threat to their grip on power. Secondly, Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, following a period of his premiership between 2008 and 2012, led to mass protests in Russia. This constituted a serious challenge for the regime. Official rhetoric was quick to depict the protests as inspired and steered from abroad.³⁶ Defending the 'fortress Russia' became Putin's third term mission. Moscow interpreted Western critique of Russia's internal developments as an attempt to weaken the Russian state and undermine the ruling elite's legitimacy: 'the strengthening of our statehood is sometimes consciously interpreted as authoritarianism'.³⁷ The crisis in relations with the West, which followed Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and 'silent' intervention in Ukraine, only strengthened the identification of a strong state with the ability to defend the regime from enemies. Both developments fell in line with those elements of Russia's representation of the international that stressed the competitive nature of international politics and the West's 'malign' intentions towards Russia.

More importantly, during this period the discourse of the Russian state as transgressing the territorial boundaries of the Russian Federation gained prominence. The Russian state was to be reinforced by way of integrating the post-Soviet space and uniting Russia with former Soviet republics. Integration, as will be explained further, was not accorded the same meaning that it commonly receives in reference to the EU. The Russian World – an idea that is supposed to be unifying the post-Soviet territory – helped to construct a distinct geopolitical entity, able to compete in what was read as the multipolar international order.

Russia's vision of the international and in particular the representation of it as a multipolar order composed of rival groupings larger than a state facilitated a particular representation of the Russian state and had a bearing on the way Russia has been approaching

³⁵ R. Sakwa, *Putin Redux. Power and contradiction in contemporary Russia*, London and New York: Routledge 2014.

³⁶ S. A. Greene, "Beyond Bolotnaia", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 60:2, 2013.

³⁷ Putin 2004, *Poslanie Federalnomu Sobraniju Rossijskoi federacii* (26 May 2004) quoted after Malinova, "Russian and 'the West' in the 2000s: redefining Russian identity in official political discourse".

states in the post-Soviet space. Since regional pre-eminence improves Russia's international status, Russia is less interested in building strong states other than its own. The post-Soviet space became a means of reinforcing Russian's position. Organizing and dominating the post-Soviet region creates a *sui generis* regional basis for Russia's participation in what Russia itself identifies as the multipolar order.³⁸

The post-Soviet space: a state 'not quite foreign'

While depictions of the international realm in terms of a society of states spur claims that a particular model of a state – a rule-of-law, democratic one – is a self-evident standard and an indispensable part fitting this society, for Russia to accept such a model would place it in the difficult position of actually not meeting the standard. This does not, however, mean that Russia proposes any alternative state model.

Russia has been identified as an actor pursuing an international environment conducive to the survival of autocracy.³⁹ Western analyses of the Russian state provide rich material for constructing a model of 'illiberal statebuilding', one geared towards the creation of polities akin to Russia. Taking into account conclusions reached by the literature on Russia's political system, one might construct a 'model Russia' comprising: strong personalistic rule assuring a degree of order but requiring respect and intolerant of criticisms; a state subordinate to the wishes of the leader with no consolidated elite; cadres whose recruitment is based on elite co-optation; and a parliament relegated to 'a department of presidential administration', where political bureaucratic intrigues replace democratic controls.⁴⁰ Illiberal statebuilding would consist of re-creating states in Russia's own image. The process would be geared towards undermining democracy – in places where it has taken root – and opposing or resisting democratization.⁴¹ It would encompass the promotion of patrimonial rule undermining the rule of law, the favouring of direct state rule rather than indirect governance, creating

³⁸ The road to a greater standing in global affairs requires the re-establishing of a stronger regional position in the CIS. A. Malashenko. 2012. *Tsentrlnaya Aziya: na chto rasschityvayet Rossiya*. Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7.

³⁹ Shevtsova, "Forward to the past in Russia"; A. Malashenko, *Tsentrlnaya Aziya: na chto rasschityvayet Rossiya*, Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 2012, 9; N. J. Jackson, "The role of external factors in advancing non-liberal democratic forms of political rule: a case study of Russia's influence on Central Asian regimes", *Contemporary Politics*, 16: 1, 2010; Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*; P. Burnell, "Promoting democracy backwards", *Documentos de Trabajo FRIDE*: 28, 2006.

⁴⁰ These elements are based on Mommsen's analysis of Russian political system, see: M. Mommsen, "Russia's Political Regime: Neo-Soviet Authoritarianism and Patronal Presidentialism", in *Presidents, Oligarchs and Bureaucrats. Forms of Rule in the Post-Soviet Space*, ed. S. Stewart, et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 69-77.

⁴¹ Ambrosio exposes the first instance on the example of Georgia and Ukraine and the latter on the case of Belarus, Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*.

institutions without a constitutional basis and supporting parties that do not function as intermediaries of interest articulation.⁴² The idea of the Russian World makes the state a redundant construct when it comes to post-Soviet polities other than Russia. An independent post-Soviet state ceases to be a relevant institution in and of itself; instead it is meant to become part of the Russian World.

The process of discursive subordination of the newly independent states to the Russian 'centre' started prior to Russia's economic revival of the mid 2000s and set the stage for the re-hierarchisation of the post-Soviet area. While for the West it has been the notion of state 'failure', 'underdevelopment' or 'fragility' that paved the way for policies of international statebuilding, Russia undermined its new neighbours' sovereignty in more explicit ways. Shortly after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia, determined to gain international legitimacy for its zone of special interests in the post-Soviet region, embarked on securing what it saw as its unalienable rights in the region. In Russia's rhetoric of the time, it aimed to legitimize its status as the guarantor of peace and stability in the post-Soviet space. In 1992 Evgenii Ambartsumov, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, declared that as the legal successor to the USSR, Russia had the right to a sphere of its vital interests and it 'must seek the world community's understanding and recognition of its interests in this space'.⁴³ The newly independent states were considered of lesser international standing than Russia, the successor to the global empire. The term 'near abroad' was in frequent use in Russian discourse on the post-Soviet sphere.⁴⁴ It manifested and symbolised Russia's challenging the right of post-Soviet states to sovereignty. A sister-concept of 'not quite foreign' reinforced and exposed the inferior position post-Soviet states were deemed to occupy.⁴⁵

Parts of the official discourse referred to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a 'form of statehood':

Many people both in Russia and in Ukraine, as well as in other republics hoped that the Commonwealth of Independent States that was created at the time would become the new common form of statehood. They were told that there would be a single

⁴² Mommsen, "Russia's Political Regime: Neo-Soviet Authoritarianism and Patronal Presidentialism", 66-79.

⁴³ *Izvestia*, 7.08.1992.

⁴⁴ B. D. Porter and C. R. Saivetz, "The once and future empire: Russia and the "near abroad"", *Washington Quarterly*, 17: 3, 1994. The major state-owned Russian information agency TASS reports news from post-Soviet states under the rubric '*Blizhneye zarubezhye*', <http://itar-tass.com/blizhnee-zarubezhe>.

⁴⁵ S. Page, "The Creation of a Sphere of Influence: Russia and Central Asia", *International Journal*, 49: 4, 1994: 789.

currency, a single economic space, joint armed forces; however, all this remained empty promises, while the big country was gone.⁴⁶

The tone of the sphere of influence argument has been undergoing changes. During Medvedev's presidency it was supplemented with a strong rhetorical emphasis on regional integration and started emulating the discourse prevalent in the West, in particular the EU's rhetoric of neighbourhood. In 2008, the then Russian president Medvedev stated:

... there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbours, we will pay particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries ...⁴⁷

Despite this aspiration for political correctness, Russia seemed torn between the urge to manifest strength and the need to expose benign motives. Admittedly, more attention has been paid to justification and legitimization. The discourse, however, remained rich in references to civilisation, suggesting that arrangements proposed by Russia for the CIS states are of higher value, and pertain to a rational and progress-oriented vision. Russia's political leadership on several occasions referred to the Eurasian Union as 'the most civilised' way of arranging regional relations.⁴⁸

The global economic crisis of 2008-9 reinvigorated the Eurasian integration project. Integration began to be portrayed as a necessity and justified in terms of a *natural* process of repairing the damage that ensued after the common space, i.e. the Soviet Union, broke apart.⁴⁹ Discourse has described the Eurasian political space in terms of a distinct civilisation⁵⁰ and referred to the post-Soviet states as 'brotherly nations' (*bratskiye narody*).⁵¹ The integration project has effectively been portrayed as re-integration. Numerous failed integration ideas of the 1990s (enumerated in the next section) came to be depicted as success stories or as springboards to the newest phase of integration. Stress has been laid on the

⁴⁶ Vladimir Putin addressed State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ D. Medvedev, *Interwju rossijskim telekanalam «Pierwyj», «Rossija», NTW, 31 August 2008*, 2008 available from www.kremlin.ru.

⁴⁸ Interview with Dmitry Medvedev for Georgian television Rustavi-2, 6 August 2013 (via *Johnson's Russia List* 2013, #143, 7 August 2013).

⁴⁹ A. Agasaryan, "Yevraziiskaya Integratsiya Kak Novaya Paradigma Razvitiya Postsovetского Prostranstva", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*: 4, 2014.

⁵⁰ T. Mansurov, "Yevrazes: Ot Integratsionnogo Sotrudnichestva K Yevraziiskomu Ekonomicheskomu Soyuzu", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*: 10, 2014; Agasaryan, "Yevraziiskaya Integratsiya Kak Novaya Paradigma Razvitiya Postsovetского Prostranstva".

⁵¹ A. Koshel, "Politicheskiye Determinanty Yevraziiskoi Integratsii", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*: 11, 2014.

continuity of the goal of integration rather than on missed opportunities.⁵² It became important to demonstrate the common ownership of this process as opposed to alleged Russia's aspirations to hegemony. For that reason the discourse underscores that the idea for Eurasian integration was initially presented by Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev.⁵³

Vladimir Putin, the then prime minister, offered the most comprehensive vision of the Eurasian integration in an article published in the *Izvestia* daily in October 2011.⁵⁴ Putin, accentuating civilizational ties, described the integration idea as the 'historic landmark', not only for those participating in the project, but also for all post-Soviet states. Integration was presented as a long-term process that should remain isolated from short-term variations. Putin directly identified the Eurasian Union as one of the poles of international politics, located between the European Union and the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁵

The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation demonstrates a double approach towards post-Soviet states. On the one hand, stress is laid on the common cultural and civilizational heritage, implying equality among all post-Soviet states. On the other hand, the document attempts to justify Russia's privileged rights with regard to ethnic Russians, or compatriots (*sootechestvenniki*), living in post-Soviet states.⁵⁶ Although Russia declares its respect for choices made by particular states, it expects these states to fulfil their 'obligations that had been assumed' with regard to integration processes in the post-Soviet space.⁵⁷ Declarations made by Russian officials about respecting the sovereignty of post-Soviet states are always accompanied by the emphasis on close ties, which confirm the only possible direction for their relations: ever closer integration.⁵⁸

Practical engagement: building more than a Russian state

There are a number of tools Russia uses to re-arrange the post-Soviet space. Regional integration in its economic and political guises is the most prominent one but arrangements

⁵² A. Stepanenko, "Protsess Yevraziiskoi Integratsii Stran Sng", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*: 9 2014; Mansurov, "Yevrazes: Ot Integratsionnogo Sotrudnichestva K Yevraziiskomu Ekonomicheskomu Soyuzu".

⁵³ Mansurov, "Yevrazes: Ot Integratsionnogo Sotrudnichestva K Yevraziiskomu Ekonomicheskomu Soyuzu".

⁵⁴ V. Putin, "Novyi Integratsionnyi Proyekt Dliya Yevrazii-Budushcheye, Kotoroye Rozhdayetsiya Segodniya" *Izvestia*, 3 oktyabrya 2011, <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761> (last accessed 13 December 2014).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ ROSSIYA, "Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi Federatsii, utwierzhdena prezidentom Rossiyskoi Federatsii V. V. Putinym 12 fevraliya 2013 g.."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ G. Karasin, "Razumnoi Alternativy Integratsionnym Formatam Sng Net", *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*: 6 2012.

related to security and development aid also play a significant role. Importantly, none of these tools are explicitly geared towards the strengthening of state institutions in former Soviet republics, while all are implicitly directed towards enhancing Russia's regional standing.

No 'model Russia'

Undoubtedly, Central Asian regimes look to Russia for inspiration. Local elites follow Russia's example in adopting legislation allowing for curbing political protests and enhancing tools for political repression. Russian legislation has served as an example for Kyrgyzstan in its attempt at stigmatising gay people. Legislative mimicking includes a law that requires NGOs that receive funding from outside the country to register as 'foreign agents'. Such a law took effect in Russia at the end of 2012, in Tajikistan in 2014 and in Kyrgyzstan in 2015. This process has been described in literature as 'regional authoritarian learning'.⁵⁹ This learning has been facilitated by a belief, widespread among the elites of post-Soviet states, that this is the way it has always been and should be. Legislation has always come from Moscow, which is why contemporary initiatives raise few doubts.⁶⁰

But these processes cannot be summed up as a deliberate creation on part of Russia of a state according to a specific model. Statebuilding is neither an element of Russian discourse with reference to post-Soviet states, nor can it be found in the repertoire of Moscow's policies. Despite Moscow's significant influence on various aspects of post-Soviet statehood, the concept of statebuilding is contested, if not altogether rejected in Russia.⁶¹

Eurasian integration

As opposed to the increasingly sophisticated rhetoric, the balance sheet of Russia's practical engagement in regional integration looks mixed. Russia proposed a number of integrationist ideas for specific states from its vast neighbourhood area. The Economic Union built around the rouble, the Customs Union, the CIS Free Trade Agreement, the Single Economic Space and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) are just several examples. Some of these initiatives remained on paper only, while others were given shape in the form of agreements, remaining, however, without the necessary ratification or incorporation into national legislation and hence never proceeded to the implementation phase. The multiplication of integration structures, termed by Russian officials as 'flexible

⁵⁹ Jackson, "The role of external factors in advancing non-liberal democratic forms of political rule: a case study of Russia's influence on Central Asian regimes".

⁶⁰ Interview, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 2013.

⁶¹ Interviews, Moscow, October 2013.

geometry’ or ‘differentiated speed’,⁶² reveals Russia’s determination as well as poor efficiency in terms of rearranging the post-Soviet space.

The most recent initiative comprises the creation of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, both now functioning under the umbrella of the Eurasian Economic Union. A renewed impulse for integration came from the then prime minister Vladimir Putin in June 2009, following his meeting with presidents of Belarus and Kazakhstan. In November 2009, three states – Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus – signed documents forming the legal basis for the Customs Union. As of 2010, these states started applying the single customs tariff and the Common Customs Code. The customs border between Russia and Belarus ceased to exist in the second half of 2010, and between Russia and Kazakhstan in 2011.⁶³

The legal basis for a more advanced form of economic integration, the Common Economic Space (CES), was agreed in 2010 and the CES started functioning in January 2012.⁶⁴ The goal of the Common Economic Space was to introduce the ‘four freedoms of movement’: of goods, services, capital and labour, and as such a creation of a single market among the participating states. Members agreed to coordinate their macro-economic policies, harmonise competition policy, public procurement, investment rules and technical standards.⁶⁵ In November 2011, presidents of the three states signed documents envisioning the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU).⁶⁶ The Eurasian Commission, a joint institution managing the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, started functioning in 2012. The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union was signed in 2014.⁶⁷ In the same year, Armenia, under Russian pressure, declared its readiness to join the new organization, while Kyrgyzstan agreed a ‘road-map’ to membership. The Eurasian Economic Union became operational in January 2015, the same month Armenia was reported joining the organization. In May 2015, President Almazbek Atambayev committed Kyrgyzstan to the EaEU.

⁶² Karasin, “Razumnoi Alternativy Integratsionnym Formatam Sng Net”.

⁶³ Mansurov, “Yevrazes: Ot Integratsionnogo Sotrudnichestva K Yevraziiskomu Ekonomicheskomu Soyuzu”; I. Wiśniewska, *Eurasian Integration. Russia's Attempt at the Economic Unification of the Post-Soviet Area*, OSW Studies, Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies: 2013.

⁶⁴ In 2003 for the first time, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine attempted to create the Common Economic Space, but in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution the idea was dropped. Wiśniewska, *Eurasian Integration. Russia's Attempt at the Economic Unification of the Post-Soviet Area*; Mansurov, “Yevrazes: Ot Integratsionnogo Sotrudnichestva K Yevraziiskomu Ekonomicheskomu Soyuzu”.

⁶⁵ Wiśniewska, *Eurasian Integration. Russia's Attempt at the Economic Unification of the Post-Soviet Area*, 16-22.

⁶⁶ These included the Declaration on the Eurasian Economic Union and the treaty on the Eurasian Economic Commission (EaEC). For the text of the declaration, see: http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/1091. The full text of the treaty on Eurasian Economic Commission can be found at: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/>.

⁶⁷ The full text of the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union can be found at: <http://www.eaeunion.org/>.

The EaEU is an ‘umbrella’ for the previous forms of integration, i.e. the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. The aims for future integration are ambitious. Apart from the single market envisioned by the CES, it should lead to the creation of a single financial and energy markets by 2025.⁶⁸ Institutional arrangements of this project resemble those of the EU. Formally, integration is administered by a supra-national body, the College of the Eurasian Economic Commission. College members are selected by member states to oversee 23 departments, each of which is responsible for particular economic sectors and issues. The College is overseen by the government-level Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission. Both are supervised by the High Eurasian Economic Council, which operates at the level of prime ministers or presidents.⁶⁹

The steps that preceded the current phase of integration, namely the establishment of the Eurasian Development Bank in 2006 and the Eurasian Anti-Crisis Fund in 2008, additionally testify to Moscow’s willingness to retain exclusive influence over the post-Soviet area. Russia created these institutions in order to limit the influence of what it perceived as Western-led international financial institutions, such as the IMF or the Asian Development Bank, where the US and Japan play an important role.

The scope of the EaEU project’s ambitions demonstrates that Russia wants to achieve political as well as economic goals. Even though official documents stress that integration takes place exclusively in the economic sphere and emphasize the necessity of respecting all member states’ sovereignty, successful economic integration can be expected to lead to political integration and the de facto subordination of smaller states to Russia. Russian authors point out that closer economic ties will lead to the strengthening of the external borders of the EaEU.⁷⁰ While the European states in their international arrangements attempted to diminish differences in political and economic power, for Moscow, post-Soviet integration in the form of the EEU is to secure Russia’s leadership and reinforce the existing hierarchical arrangements. Integration is also expected to foreclose the post-Soviet space from the European Union’s influence.

The practices of functioning of Eurasian integration relatively quickly demonstrated both the limitations of economic co-operation and the scope of Russia’s political ambitions. Tensions in relations with the West and the sanctions that Russia has encountered since the

⁶⁸ Stepanenko, “Protsess Yevraziiskoi Integratsii Stran Sng”.

⁶⁹ Nicu Popescu, *Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely*, Chaillot Paper 132 (Paris: EUISS 2014), p. 9.

⁷⁰ I. Safranchuk, "Globalizatsiya v golovakh", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike* 14:1, 2015.

annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Ukraine, triggered a unilateral change in the principles on which the Eurasian integration was founded. Despite the existence of the Customs Union and progress in the establishment of a single market, Russia decided to impose a number of limitations on the transit of goods from Belarus to Kazakhstan through the territory of the Russian Federation.⁷¹ Such actions undermine the economic logic of integration but they reinforce Russian political control over particular members. They reveal that both the supranational character of key institutions of the EaEU and the legal foundations of integration are illusory.

Russia is the initiator and main stakeholder in all the new institutions taking shape in the post-Soviet area. Their creation is perceived by the Russian elite as a way to guarantee Russia's political oversight, influence and control over the post-Soviet states.

Development aid: everything but statebuilding

While in the realm of Western-led development assistance statebuilding acquired a depoliticised, technical meaning, it is deeply politicized in Russia and as such preferably avoided. Russia prefers to speak of its engagement with less developed post-Soviet states in terms of social, economic and humanitarian assistance (the term *gumanitarnaya pomoshch* is by far the most frequently used). Statebuilding is non-existent at the discursive level of Russia's development assistance as well as in terms of projects implemented in particular post-Soviet states.⁷²

The donor role, the role of a promoter and centre of integration initiatives, is perceived by Russia as a matter of status, enhancing its position on the international arena.⁷³ Back in 2004, Russia still figured on the OECD list of aid recipients.⁷⁴ Russia's renunciation of the aid recipient role is part and parcel of Russia's strategy for achieving and maintaining self-esteem as well as making other actors recognize and acknowledge it. Rather than the improvement of specific conditions in the receiving state, the goal of Russia's development

⁷¹ T. A. Shakleina and A. A. Baikov, *Megatrendy. Osnovnyye trayektorii evolutsii mirovogo poriyadka v XXI veke*, Moskva: Aspekt Press: 2014.

⁷² Interview, Moscow, October 2013. See also: D. Birichevskii and I. Safranchuk, "Osnovnyye kharakteristiki rossiiskoi politiki v oblasti SMR" *Vestnik Mezhdunarodnykh Organizatsii*, 2, 2013; *Kontseptsiya uchstiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii v sodeistvii mezhdunarodnomu razvitiyu*. Utverzhdena prezidentom Rossiiskoi Federatsii 14 iyuniya 2007 g.

⁷³ Interview by the author, high-ranking state official of the Russian Federation, Moscow, October 2013. See also Birichevskii and Safranchuk, 'Osnovnyye kharakteristiki rossiiskoi politiki v oblasti SMR', 86-90.

⁷⁴ For a discussion on Russian public perceptions being an aid recipient and an aid donor, see A. Brezhneva and D. Ukhova, *Russia as a humanitarian aid donor*, Oxfam Discussion Paper (Oxfam 2013), <<http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/dp-russia-humanitarian-donor-150713-en.pdf>> (25 October 2014), p. 20.

co-operation is to ‘look seriously’ in the international arena and to be perceived as a ‘responsible and civilized’ donor.⁷⁵

In 2007, Russia adopted a policy strategy on development assistance – *The Concept of Russia’s participation in development co-operation*.⁷⁶ Since then it has been building up its aid implementation agency – *Rossotrudnichestvo* – with branches in former Soviet republics. Between 2009 and 2011, the World Bank and the Russian Finance Ministry pursued a project, funded by British Department for International Development (DFID), aimed at strengthening Russia’s potential as a donor.⁷⁷

The other angle of Russia’s involvement in development cooperation is its declared strategy of using aid to pursue national interests. Beyond the symbolic role of Russia’s development co-operation, pragmatic incentives underlie its engagement. The 2007 *Concept* indicates that development cooperation should help Russia obtain political dividends, limit external risks and strengthen Russian economic presence on foreign markets.⁷⁸

Russia aspires to be visible as the key donor in the CIS states. Implementing projects which could be identified as ‘Russian’ by the elites and societies of recipient states is to increase Russia’s image as an indispensable and benign great power in the post-Soviet space. Dmitri Medvedev defined the goal of *Rossotrudnichestvo* in the following way: ‘These states which obtain funds from us, should know better, where does the assistance come from’.⁷⁹ Russia thus wants to make its own mark and to create an image of Russia as an engaged regional actor. These practices are, however, intrinsically linked to Russia’s rejection of what it interprets as ‘US activities in the realm of soft power’, which are said to encompass the fomenting of colour revolutions and the creation of hostile regimes.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Birichevskii and Safranchuk, ‘Osnovnyye kharakteristiki’, p. 86.

⁷⁶ Russian Federation, *Kontseptsiya uchastiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii v sodeistvii mezhdunarodnomu razvitiyu*. (Moskva 2007).

⁷⁷ Yevgenii V. Levkin, ‘Vozmozhnosti povysheniya potentsiala rossiiskikh institutov sodeistviya mezhdunarodnomu razvitiyu na osnove trekhstoronnego sotrudnichestva’, *Vestnik Mezhdunarodnykh Organizatsii*, 2, 2012, pp. 86-100.

⁷⁸ D. A. Birichevskii and I. A. Safranchuk, “Osnovnyye kharakteristiki rossiiskoi politiki v oblasti SMR”, *Vestnik Mezhdunarodnykh Organizatsii*: 2, 2013: 88.

⁷⁹ K. Kosachev, “Rossotrudnichestvo: istoki, realii, perspektivy”, *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn’*: 9, 2013: 27.

⁸⁰ G. Y. Filimonov, “Aktualnyye voprosy formirovaniya strategii "miyagkoi sily" vo vneshnei politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii”, *Zakon i pravo*: 9, 2013: 18.

Intervention

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russian military forces participated in a series of conflicts: civil wars in Tajikistan, Georgia⁸¹ and Moldova,⁸² and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh. Moscow legitimised its engagement in terms of ‘international peacekeeping’⁸³ even if conflict prevention has not always been the most immediate aim and in each case Russian military forces supported the secessionist movements and enforced cease-fires, disadvantageous for central governments.⁸⁴

Russia has been legitimizing its various degrees of intervention by reference to the need to protect large numbers of ethnic Russians remaining beyond Russia’s borders following the break-up of the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ In the early 1990s, on top of peacekeeping, the right to defend compatriots was used to justify Russian-led military intervention in the civil conflicts in the post-Soviet space: Abkhazia (Georgia), South Ossetia (Georgia), Transnistria (Moldova).⁸⁶ This argument returned in 2008 during the Russian-Georgia war, when it was re-packaged in the rhetoric of human rights protection. Russia claimed there existed urgent necessity to prevent humanitarian catastrophe and drew upon the responsibility to protect concept.⁸⁷

Russia’s involvement in Ukraine in 2014 represents a similar practice of retaining control through intervention. Before the annexation of Crimea, Russia invoked its right to defend ethnic Russians. The Kremlin initially denied having sent additional troops to Crimea with the view to reinforce the Black Sea Fleet present there. In the aftermath of the annexation, however, Russia admitted an increase in its military presence and justified it with the need to protect civilians from the alleged threat posed by the Ukrainian forces.⁸⁸ In addition, president Putin legitimised the move with reference to Kosovo:

⁸¹ W. H. Hill, *Russia, the Near Abroad, and the West: Lessons from the Moldova-Transnistria Conflict*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press: 2012, 31-35.

⁸² W. H. Hill, *Russia, the Near Abroad, and the West: Lessons from the Moldova-Transnistria Conflict*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press: 2012, 52-56.

⁸³ R. Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2013, 127-129.

⁸⁴ Tsygankov, *Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity*, 81-85; Hill, *Russia, the Near Abroad, and the West: Lessons from the Moldova-Transnistria Conflict*.

⁸⁵ Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian foreign policy under Putin”: 670.

⁸⁶ Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, 126-127.

⁸⁷ Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, 156-159. This approach was usually assisted with providing individuals in the break-away provinces of independent states, such as Georgia and Moldova, with the Russian Federation’s passports.

⁸⁸ R. Allison, "Russian ‘deniable’ intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules", *International Affairs*, 90: 6, 2014.

the Crimean authorities referred to the well-known Kosovo precedent – a precedent our Western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation, when they agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now, was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country's central authorities.⁸⁹

Russia's regional interventions clearly contradict Russia's concern with territorial integrity and respect for sovereignty. While on the global scale Russia relishes norms of sovereignty and non-intervention, the regional realm has been subject to a variety of moves compromising the sovereignty of post-Soviet states.

The case of Kyrgyzstan

Relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan are multifaceted but it would be difficult to claim they have been built on sovereign equality or around the aim of statebuilding. There is no state model that Russia has promoted in Kyrgyzstan.

While Western states in their development assistance and statebuilding efforts are motivated by the ideology of progress, Russia places particular discursive emphasis on the notion of friendship and prosperity. A common term used with regard to the future of Kyrgyzstan is 'a prosperous state' (*protsvetayushchaya strana*). In its promotional fliers *Rossatrudnichestvo* declares its activity is aimed at an 'even stronger' rapprochement between the two states. A banner in the Bishkek branch of *Rossatrudnichestvo* announces: 'Russia and Kyrgyzstan: strong friendship and fraternity are the wealth of our nations'.⁹⁰ The notion of friendship goes far back in history. In Soviet times it was an important idea promoted between all Soviet republics. The idea survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and was perpetuated in various forms throughout the 1990s. For instance the 1998 edition of *The Compilation of official documents on Russian-Kyrgyz relations in the 18th and 19th centuries* opens with a photograph of the then presidents Boris Yeltsin of Russia and Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan. The introductory chapter is a narrative about *ages of friendship* and makes repeated use of the notion *brotherly countries*.

⁸⁹ Vladimir Putin addressed State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, accessed 19-03-2014.

⁹⁰ The phrase is a rhyme in Russian: Rossiya i Kirgizya: krepkaya druzhba i bratstvo – nashikh narodov bogatstvo (Россия и Киргизия: крепкая дружба и братство – наших народов богатство).

The narrative of friendship is disrupted by less cordial rhetoric and gestures. The Russian Embassy has issued a number of official communiqués in which the ambassador comments on speeches of particular Kyrgyzstani MPs, Bishkek city council deputies or the post-2010 government in general. This discourse addresses Kyrgyzstan with reprehension and denigration. For example, commenting on a Kyrgyzstani MP's statement on a financial-legal matter related to payments for the translation of Russian television programmes, the official communiqué reads: 'The Embassy hopes that the Kyrgyz parliament will be able to handle the situation' (*Posolstvo nadeyetsya, chto kirgizskiy parlamentarii smogut razobratsya v slozhivsheysya situatsii*). This comment's insulting undertone suggests disregard for parliamentary democracy in Kyrgyzstan. It is, however, difficult to assess to what extent this is a result of a deliberate policy, and how far it is the consequence of a general disregard for Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty, irrespective of the political system currently in place.

State institutions, which find the pride of place in Western representation of a state, are of no particular importance for Russia. Instead of supporting institutions, Russia lends support to individual figures on Kyrgyzstan's political scene and attempts to forge or sustain pro-Russian sentiments among the Kyrgyzstani citizenry.

Stability has been the key organising concept used by Russian scholars and officials with regard to Central Asia. It has been identified as the desired goal, one which Russia should help executing.⁹¹ The discourse of stability has served to portray Russia as the only possible player capable of delivering it and as yet another way of expressing contempt for the state of Kyrgyzstan:

You in the West know nothing about states such as Kyrgyzstan. Everything can collapse there in just two days' time. This is a savage state and needs to be treated with a stick.⁹²

A specific approach to and understanding of democracy and institutions transpires in this approach, both are seen as either undermining stability or delaying the necessary stabilization:

Russia has to do its utmost to stabilize the region, other aspects, such as institutions, will come after that, we will work it out step by step.⁹³

⁹¹ Interview, Rossotrudnichestvo, Moscow, October 2013.

⁹² Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

Russian development aid to Kyrgyzstan has been presented as aimed at the provision of economic and political stability.⁹⁴ Political practice did not correspond to this rhetoric. In April 2010, Kyrgyzstan faced a revolution that overthrew the then president, Maxim Bakiyev. Roza Otunbayeva, sworn as the new president, explicitly asked for a military intervention when clashes erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. Moscow refused and limited its actions to increasing the number of soldiers in the military Kant base situated in the north of the country.⁹⁵

Officials interviewed for this thesis, when asked about a model of a state Russia was promoting in Central Asia, usually reminded me that Russia, unlike the US, had never been interested in the politics of regime change. The discussion was usually immediately directed towards deficiencies in the Western approach. The West would then be criticised for its deliberate aim of wanting to organise states such as Kyrgyzstan in its own image and, crucially, without Russian participation: 'The West wants it all to be without Russia, it wants Kyrgyzstan to be independent of Russia',⁹⁶ 'Russia wants its interests to be respected'.⁹⁷ Interviewees pointed out that Russia does not think Western support for electoral processes would be effective.⁹⁸ The West was also castigated for an overtly technocratic approach: 'You have not given them any values'.⁹⁹

The realm of cultural co-operation is an example of the production of what should appear as a joint political space. Russia opened a number of initiatives that aim at the strengthening of historical, cultural, scientific and educational ties between Russia and Kyrgyzstan. The Eurasian Foundation (*Fond kulturno-istoricheskoye soobshchestvo «Yevraziysy — novaya volna»*) was established in May 2010. Its goals include the strengthening of historical, cultural and educational ties between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, support for the Kyrgyz NGOs and media, and the promotion of the Russian language. The Fund's activities focus on Eurasian integration and aim at reinforcing the image of Russia as Kyrgyzstan's 'genuine friend'.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

⁹⁴ Interview, Rossotrudnichestvo, Moscow, October 2013.

⁹⁵ A. Matveeva, "Russia's changing role in Central Asia", *European Security*, ahead of print, 2013: 8-9.

⁹⁶ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

⁹⁷ Interview, Rossotrudnichestvo, Moscow 2013.

⁹⁸ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

⁹⁹ Interview, Moscow, October 2013.

¹⁰⁰ See the website of the Eurasian Foundation: <http://www.enw-fond.ru/o-nas.html> (last accessed 30 June 2015).

Russia contributes to the shaping of Kyrgyzstan's historic identity and its recent efforts have been focused on reinforcing the notion of a common identity and common historical heritage. The commemorations of the Great Patriotic War are among many events that help in this endeavour. Russia also engages in the promotion of specific 'national' heroes of Kyrgyzstan. In February 2015 *Rossotrudnichestvo* organized the commemoration of the 130th birthday anniversary of Mikhail Frunze. Born in Bishkek, as a Soviet commander he subordinated Central Asia to the Bolshevik rule.¹⁰¹ The capital city bore his name between 1926 and 1991.

Kyrgyzstan's political and public landscape remains divided when it comes to the assessment of Russia's discourse and policies. President Atambayev has been reported as stating: 'Without Russia we have no separate future'.¹⁰² Some media outlets, in turn, see specific political and economic manoeuvres in Kyrgyzstan as Russification or re-colonisation. For instance *The Times of Central Asia* interpreted the sale of Kyrgyzgaz company for a symbolic price of US \$1 to Russian gas monopoly Gazprom as a landmark example of Kyrgyzstan's Russification.¹⁰³

Despite the difficulties in tracing direct links, Russia has influence on Kyrgyzstan's media landscape. Between 2010 and 2013 Russian-language newspapers in Kyrgyzstan covered Russia-sponsored initiatives to the neglect of West-funded projects. Articles describing Russian assistance projects replaced columns dedicated to Western aid. There has been very little critical press regarding the prospects of joining the Customs Union. Opinion columns or interviews with pro-Russian figures started dominating the Russian-language daily, *Vecherny Bishkek*. For instance, the newspaper published an interview with Leonid Ivashov, Russian general of Kyrgyzstani origin, arguing that the future of Kyrgyzstan is 'together with Russia' and that the governing of a state should be based on a system of tight control (*sistema zhestokogo kontrolya*).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Facebook page of the Bishkek branch of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, last accessed 6 February 2015.

¹⁰² The Times of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan: future economic and political colony of Russia and China?, 12 August 2013 <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/politics-analyses-and-opinions/11369-kyrgyzstan-future-economic-and-political-colony-of-russia-and-china>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Vechernii Bishkek*, 16 August 2013, interview with Leonid Ivashov, *General Ivashov: Rossiya i Kyrgyzstan obrecheny byt' vmeste*. Extracts from the interview were published on-line: http://www.vb.kg/doc/239662_general_ivashov_rossiya_i_kyrgyzstan_obrecheny_byt_vmeste.html

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that the way Russia envisions the international is intertwined with Russian discursive and practical approaches to the state. First, it makes Russia focus predominantly on the Russian state, the interpretation and discursive construction of which extends beyond geographical borders of the Russian Federation to cover the majority of the post-Soviet space. The second and related point is that representations of the international produced in Russia facilitate the disregard for sovereignty and institutions of post-Soviet states, such as Kyrgyzstan. The discourse of the Russian World and Russian civilization, which supplanted the early 1990s narrative of the sphere of influence, refocuses the terms of debate from institutions to grandiose civilizational ideas conducive to and used as justification for downplaying the sovereignty of post-Soviet states.

Unlike the case of Western-led statebuilding, where a specific state model is well articulated, it is impossible to find a model of a state Russia would be promoting, forging or enforcing in the post-Soviet space. There are no rules that would form a clear model of illiberal statebuilding. The strengthening of institutions is not the primary goal. Nor has Russia constructed a coherent and distinctive set of characteristics that could counter or challenge the Western 'menu'. The key difference, in comparison with Western ambitions, is that Russia does not engage in any precise elaboration of requirements for the right kind of state. While the liberal conceptions of the state are highly elaborate and commonly presented with scientific language, Russia speaks about the state in very general terms and mostly with reference to its own statehood rather than with respect to polities occupying the post-Soviet space. The primary aim is not to be explicit about a state, nor to build one. The objective for the post-Soviet area is to sustain feeble polities relying on relations with Russia. Despite the fact that Russia has significant impact on polities in the post-Soviet space, it does not see itself as participating in the statebuilding effort. Instead its policy practice is focused on the construction of a greater polity, one deemed necessary to secure a proper place for Russia in what it represents as a multipolar world order.

CHAPTER 6 Conclusion: The *fairyland of ideas* – knowledge production and potent representations of the international

Maps, through the ambition of their creators and their purposeful aesthetics, legitimize knowledge claims and mask the ideology accompanying their production. These characteristics boost their power to arrange the world in specific ways. The point of departure for this intellectual journey was to enquire how – in the domain of international politics rather than in cartography – certain contemporary representations of the international realm influence the thinking and practical approaches to the state. The thesis engaged with the idea of international society as advanced in academia and with the concept of international community pursued in the discourse of policy practice. I proposed to look at these two in many respects cognate ideas from the sociology of knowledge perspective. The thesis was motivated by my observation that in international politics there is not enough recognition of how a vantage point skews the theorists and policy practitioners' view and too little reflection on the consequences of representations which are the product of theorising, the result of frameworks or lenses we adopt. My hope was to encourage reflection on these issues and to disrupt ideas which started to seem natural in international politics as theorised and practised.

The thesis argued that representations of the international can become powerful ideas, particularly when they stimulate thinking and acting with regard to phenomena beyond their description, such as the state. In the hope of illuminating the process through which ideas gain power and in order to shed light on the consequences of constructing specific images of the world, I asked about ways in which representations of the international, such as the scholarly concept of international society and the idea of international community, contribute to shaping the thinking, expectations and actions with regard to the state. I illustrated how only a particular, desirable type of a state is a welcome member of international society/community. The model of a state is as much a technical thing, i.e. a set of criteria, standards and policy prescriptions to be implemented, as it is an ideological one. Contributing to the unity of the greater whole, this particular model of a state is considered to be of superior validity. Aiming to distort the purported naturalness of international society, I juxtaposed the international society idea with representations of the international produced by Russian scholars and policymakers. The representation of the international in terms of the

Russian World and its confrontation with another world pole, the West, requires efforts to strengthen a polity that would transcend Russian Federation borders.

The thought of Bourdieu, Skinner and Mannheim served as an important springboard for making arguments about knowledge production on the international realm. Sociology of knowledge allowed for adopting a distant perspective on IR frameworks, rather than working through them, treating them as tools or lenses. Skinner stimulated my thinking about scholarly and policy representations as ideas and made me discern these ideas from an array of texts and acknowledge their historical context. Bourdieu suggested a method of reading these representations from scholarly and policy discourse and made me think of them as elements of knowledge production. Thus my understanding of context broadened and started to encompass, beyond events in world history, social processes taking place in the history of IR as a discipline and among the community of policy practitioners. Mannheim and standpoint ontology suggested there was merit in distinguishing between perspectives, even if the subject matter was the supposedly shared or intersubjectively constructed international realm. Accepting that sociology of knowledge in IR is an extremely broad research problem, I humbly propose a reflection taking into consideration varying social circumstances and distinct interpretations of history, which are all conducive to the production of specific rather than common representations of the world.

This concluding part, recapitulating consequences that representations of the international have on concepts and actions pursued with regard to states, extends the analysis and explores similarities in the process of knowledge production in the West and in Russia. In considering parallels in academic and policy knowledge production enterprises, the concluding chapter attempts to go a step further and asks what makes certain representations of the international so powerful. The thesis suggests that ideational representations of the international perform functions akin to political myths, i.e. they are a specific type of a narrative, believed to be true or acted upon as if they were true and executing several important functions. A political myth of international society/community assists in defining the common purpose, for scholars and policymakers alike. It expresses collective identity and provides a sense of cohesiveness in both worlds: that of the ivory tower, in particular among scholars claiming identification with the English School, and in the policy realm among practitioners of statebuilding. The myth of the Russian World embeds multipolarity as a natural state of affairs. It naturalises Russia's special role in the post-Soviet space, justifying actions undertaken beyond Russia's borders. Political myths, while creating the illusion of

simplicity and control, provide significance, help comprehend experiences, clarify or offer objectives and prompt action in their pursuit.¹

Representations of the international and their bearing on the state

Through this thesis I attempted to illustrate that specific representations of the international have the potential to influence concepts and policies pursued with regard to states. I argued that the idea of international society had the power to structure thinking about the right kind of state member of the society of states.

The English School's main contribution to world history is to show how an international society formed in Europe expanded to take over the world. Through the success of its imperialism, Europe remade the world politically in its own image of sovereign territorial states, diplomacy and international law. Decolonization left behind *a world in Europe's image*, in some places made quite *well*, and in other places *badly*.²

This quotation does much more than just assessing or praising the English School's contribution. The world in Europe's image becomes reified and validated, together with the model of a state, which, when implemented well, leaves practically nothing more to be desired in international politics. International society framework requires a particular kind of state, one meeting the criteria for 'rightful membership'. Thereby international society – a mere representation of the international – becomes powerful enough to dictate what kind of subjects are entitled to participate in international relations and how they are meant 'to behave'.

Discourses pursued in policy practice developed a similar narrative. A weak state has been presented as not fitting the whole portrayed as universal international community. The idea of international community allows for the objectification of state weakness and the production of various rankings geared towards states classification. This is accompanied by constructing a state model and the production of a variety of *international* standards a state should meet. The idea of international community prompts specific policies directed at states deemed weak. Democratic institutions supported by rule of law are deemed the major

¹ The characteristics and functions of a political myth are based on Foley, *Ideas that shape politics*; Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*.

² A. Acharya and B. Buzan, *Non-Western international relations theory: perspectives on and beyond Asia*, London ; New York: Routledge: 2010.

component of the right kind of state and the key basis for statebuilding policies. At the same time policy discourse presents statebuilding as an activity undertaken in the name of international community. The need for statebuilding arises from what international community is considered to be and it has been carried out by those claiming to represent it. International community discourse enables and legitimizes the production of the right kind of state. In this process statebuilding becomes a natural and thus apolitical enterprise.

The way Russian political and scholarly discourse produces knowledge about the international realm has implications for the way Russian policymakers view and act with regard to a state. It allows for presenting Russia as an entity greater than a state and facilitates the perception of states occupying the post-Soviet area as not entirely sovereign. Kyrgyzstan or Ukraine's statehood is in no need of strengthening as the best way for these polities to fit the international is by aligning with Russia-built and governed institutions, subsuming under and contributing to the Russian World.

If, in this specific representation of the international, relations between the Russian World and the West are organised in confrontational rather than cooperative terms, efforts related to state strengthening will be centred on the Russian polity. The strong Russian state at the heart of the Russian World guarantees the preservation of multipolarity. Conversely, multipolarity, as the sole system that secures Russia's proper place in the world, requires a Russia that would be greater than a state. The Russian World and multipolarity are mutually indispensable. In this context, state strength is tightly linked to the government (read: the ruling elite) instead of effective and representative institutions. Confrontational representation of the international facilitates and legitimizes the need for a strong state.

Unlike in the case of Western-led statebuilding, where a specific state model is very well articulated, it is impossible to find a model of a state that Russia would be promoting, forging or enforcing in the post-Soviet space. Russia does not engage in any precise elaboration of requirements for the right kind of state. Nor are there any clear rules for illiberal statebuilding. The key difference, in comparison to Western ambitions, is that the aim is not to be explicit about a state. Russia's objective for the post-Soviet area is to sustain feeble polities relying on relations with Russia. Russia is not openly anti-democratic, although it does tend to emphasise problems related to parliamentary democracy. Neither is Russian discourse explicitly pro-authoritarian, but instead of supporting institutions, it lends support to individual figures on a state's political scene and attempts to forge or sustain pro-Russian sentiments among citizenry of post-Soviet states.

Similarities in the process of knowledge production: the West and Russia

Sociology of knowledge allows for exploring similarities in the process of knowledge production without necessarily valorising or validating any of the approaches. Mannheim was particularly interested in the process through which specific ideas come to assume a central place in human experience, how it happened that a worldview gained prominence. Mannheim's interest was in conceptions, methods of thinking, methods of knowledge and *intellectual strategies*, which he deliberately distinguished from logical systematisations.³

Representations of the international share several important characteristics, even though they have emerged in distinct political and social settings. Similarities in the process of knowledge production cut across the blurred and feeble boundaries between the West and Russia. In spite of all significant distinctions in the approach to the international realm, in the West and in Russia knowledge production involves reifications. Russia's reification of multipolarity is parallel to the English School treatment of the idea of international society. International society became equated with international political *reality*. In addition, endowing international society with agency became common in English School writings. On the other side of the European continent, multipolarity was cherished as offering a convenient answer to Russia's exclusion and self-esteem problem. Multipolarity was first considered a concept through which one could make sense of some features of the world, an adequate description of the world. It was later elevated to the level of official doctrine and presented as the real world, in Putin's pronouncement: 'The world is multipolar'. It may be expected that the employment of the idea of the Russian World in political and scholarly discourse will lead to this concept's reification. Discursive legitimization of the annexation of Crimea was the first poignant illustration of how the Russian World may be presented as an objective description of the world out there.

Reification is accompanied by asserting higher value and positive functions to specific representations of the international realm. The English School discourse is filled with appreciative adjectives. International society has usually been presented in positive light, as bringing order or as acting for the benefit of common humanity. The Russian World is to denote to cultural and spiritual richness. It is also an ideational guarantor of Russia's *proper* place in the world.

³ Mannheim, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*.

The employment, explicit or otherwise, of specific values transgresses the East-West split. We necessarily make choices about what questions we ask and which elements to emphasize when we provide the answer. Such choices are motivated by value commitments.⁴ Knowledge production is embedded in value preferences. Liberal values play an important role in the way the idea of international society has been constructed and asserted itself in IR. This idea enjoys high currency due to the fact that it responds to the socio-culturally underpinned estimation of harmony, order and integration. The idea emphasizes order rather than disorder, leaving the confusions and injustices pervading international politics in the background. The first generation of the English School scholars shared the liberal ideology which impacted on the way they interpreted order in the world. The international society view of world politics is prefigured in liberal terms. International society, which states are said to be forming between them, secures their orderly coexistence. Importantly, values embedded in and conveyed by this approach are concealed by the theory's purported value-free scholarship. Despite the idea's deep roots in liberal political thought, the supporters of the international society view of international relations have presented their concept as pragmatic and functional.

Values play a role in the construction of the idea of the Russian World but, in contradiction to the international society, it would be difficult to categorise them under one ideology. The concept feeds on several important currents in Russian political thought, which stress Russia's distinctive *nature* and incompatibility with the West. These, however, cannot be easily subsumed under a conservatist label for it would suggest that the meanings ascribed to conservatism in Russian and Western political thought converge. The idea of the Russian World draws on Orthodoxy which results in the conviction about Russia's moral superiority. Specific understanding of authority, under which a leader unconstrained by rules (*samoderzhaviye*) had a moral obligation to act in the interest of *his/her* people, may have fuelled the perception of Russia's leading role in the post-Soviet region.⁵

Knowledge production plays a role in identity formation among communities that produce knowledge and among those who, in various ways, become familiar with specific elements of that knowledge. The idea of international society/community contributes to the shaping of Western identity in international politics; it builds the image of the caring West, ready to 'save strangers'. It provides the elevating feeling of helping. The Russian World, in

⁴ Suganami, "Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics", 334.

⁵ Tsygankov, *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya: traditsii russkoi politicheskoi mysli*, 19-37; Kharkhordin, *Main concepts of Russian politics*, 11-18.

turn, allows for some conclusions to be drawn in the debate on Russia's identity. It allows for transgressing the borders of Russia and reinforces Russia's self-image as a distinct civilisation.

The production of representations of the international is influenced by particular historical experience it aims to explain. The types of thinking that generated the ideas of international society and the Russian World have been rooted in concrete experiences. Hedley Bull rightly admitted that 'theorists themselves elaborate their ideas with the preoccupations and within the confines of a particular historical situation'.⁶ The English School has been praised for emphasising that IR research should be historically informed. The School's approach was deemed more complete because it drew on and accounted for historical experience. One of the contributors to *The Expansion of international society* reminds the reader: 'We certainly hold that our subject can be understood only in historical perspective, and that without the awareness of the past that generated it, the universal international society of the present can have no meaning'.⁷ The School was said to be capable of combining the study of history with theory.⁸ Its success has been sought in the way it validated the turn to history as a source of IR theory and a part of the study of IR.⁹ In advocating an historical approach to the study of international politics, Bull underscored its validity in the following way: 'Historical study is essential also because any international political situation is located in time, and to understand it we must know its place in a temporal sequence of events'.¹⁰

The English School has not, however, managed to fully unfold the consequences of this view. Scholars did not take into account that differing interpretations of historical events inevitably lead to dissimilar perceptions and interpretations of international relations. Embedding IR in history, the English School failed to recognize various views on and interpretations of history. Some English School scholars were cognizant of the fact that there may be different historical interpretations of world history. But, Martin Wight's idea that international theory is equal to historical interpretation, important as it is, has not been taken up by those contributing to the expansion paradigm.

⁶ Bull, "The theory of international politics 1919-1969", 32.

⁷ Dore, "Unity and diversity in world culture".

⁸ T. Dunne, "The English School", in *International relations theories: discipline and diversity*, ed. T. Dunne, M.H. Kurki, and S. Smith (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹ Jiangli and Buzan, "The English and Chinese schools of international relations: comparisons and lessons".

¹⁰ Bull, "The theory of international politics 1919-1969", 30.

A tendency to universalize a historical experience may be just a by-product, a not entirely intentional result. But the interpretation of world politics in terms of an orderly society was in conformity with the interests of states, which were the primary architects of the post-War and post-decolonisation international institutions. It expressed the dominant thinking shared by those living in a specific era and a particular location. Paraphrasing Mannheim, it expressed the ideology of the dominant group and served to legitimize claims to leadership.¹¹

The idea of international society/community continues to justify policies of statebuilding undertaken by Western states in international politics. It provides legitimacy for particular forms of political practice such as standard setting. The Russian World, in turn, legitimizes Russia's disrespect for the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states. Russia's interventionist practices, the most obvious of which have been the recent wars in Georgia and Ukraine, coexist with the discursive appraisal of sovereignty. Accusations of hypocrisy notwithstanding, such an approach illustrates that post-Soviet polities are not considered in terms of independent states but rather parts of a greater whole.

Disciplinary and institutional developments have played a vital role in the advancement and wide acceptance of ideational representations of the international. The discipline of IR and the policy practice of development assistance and statebuilding over the years became significant undertakings that created their own specific language and thinking frameworks. The production of discourse led to almost customary repetition of the narrative. For the English School specific circumstances related to the formation and development of IR as a discipline were crucial. The English School, which formerly positioned itself as a challenger to mainstream IR, is now regarded very much as part of the pantheon of classical theoretical approaches.¹² Throughout the past several decades, many authors have been committed to the defence of the School as a legitimate and fruitful framework within IR study.¹³

¹¹ Mannheim referred to the dynamics accompanying the raise of German conservatism and compared it to the way Burke's thinking 'expressed the ideology of the dominant nobility in England and in Germany, and it served to legitimize their claims to leadership in the state', Mannheim, *Conservatism: a contribution to the sociology of knowledge*, 106-107.

¹² Jiangli and Buzan, "The English and Chinese schools of international relations: comparisons and lessons"; H. Butterfield and M. Wight, eds., *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966).

¹³ Tim Dunne has been one of the most committed in that regard as he has devoted a significant part of his scholarship to discussing the place and value of the English School for IR theory. Dunne's *Inventing international society: a history of the English school* focused on introducing the work of a group of scholars assembled in the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and focused on their jointly

The way literature developed a comprehensive world image based on the English School's initial narrow claims about the society of states refers us back to Bourdieu's argument that the conventions of science make scientists downplay the role of imaginative acts in devising hypotheses or theories.¹⁴ Far from an abstract logical systematisation, which may be the professed aim of IR theory, the detailed representation of the international as the society of states involves imaginative acts. We are invited to associate with an image produced by a theory not only on the basis of its logical assumptions and explanatory potential but also *affect*. In other words, theories are persuasive not just for the type of explanations they provide but also for the type of an image they construct and emotions this image instigates. The Russian World is a similarly comprehensive representation, which spurs positive emotions in Russia. It allows for overcoming the trauma caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union and offers a solution to the Russian identity conundrum.

Just as a map is an image, IR theory is capable of creating an image of the international. A map is persuasive not only for its supposed accuracy and rationality but also through its aesthetics. Maps are beautiful objects whose graphics, colours and finely drawn features are used to emphasize their authority. Contemplating a map, we think we see an accurate, even if standardized, representation of the world but beneath the layers, selection and manipulation is taking place. It is indeed quite paradoxical how the drive for rigour in the study of international politics paves its way through imaginative acts and affect. International society, despite its claim to belong to the domain of knowledge rather than art, just like art requires the suspension of disbelief.

A map is valued for the fact that it provides a 'big picture'. It is admired for its coherence and wholeness. The image of the world the English School creates aspires to be similarly coherent. The objective is to show the big picture of world affairs, which in the academia can claim the right to be recognised as a grand theory. Outside of the ivory tower comprehensive representations are easier for spectators and participants to identify and engage with. Despite the elusiveness of the international, ideas such as that of international community help ground the international and present as though on a plate for a consumer. The English School implicitly adopts and perpetuates the view that a degree of wholeness and coherence is attainable in depicting the international realm.

published key volume, *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*, edited by Butterfield and Wight.

¹⁴ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, 15-18.

Since the process of producing knowledge is not entirely dissimilar in the West and in Russia, the resulting representations of the international share several characteristics. The first outstanding element is the concentration on self, which does not hinder the tendency to create universal representations of the international. The Russocentric view of the international exposed by *Russkii mir* is analogous to the Eurocentrism of international society narrative, which places liberal states at the hub of an international order, where they themselves play the role of rule setters and those responsible for the maintenance of *communal* interstate cohesion. Both ideas are driven by specific self-representation. Russia's place and position in international relations, the one desired and the one it assesses to be occupying, is of utmost importance for the way Russian discourse represents the international. Russia sees itself as a great power. The West, in turn, through representations such as international society/community – becomes a self-acclaimed agent of the universal force for good. The worldly representations aim to achieve contradictory goals. Aspiring for universal acceptance, they underscore the exceptional position of one particular region or state in the world.

It is relatively easy to claim that knowledge production in the West is for the sake of knowledge itself, whereas in Russia it is a much more politicised process. But knowledge production is a political and social process regardless of its Western or Eastern origin. There are significant differences in the social setting and what is and is not allowed in terms of knowledge production in a non-liberal state, but certain elements are shared. Knowledge is produced to provide significance, objectives, and, ultimately, it contributes to identity-building.

Theory and practice and their representations of the international

The theory-practice debate is one with a long pedigree in IR. The discussion has oscillated around themes of IR scholarship policy relevance and the extent to which scholars should participate in advising policy. Academic IR was, on the one hand, criticised for moving away from government.¹⁵ On the other, it was expected to maintain distance in order

¹⁵ Wallace, "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations".

to be able to evaluate policy, question the common sense of policy debate and what passes as an accepted view.¹⁶

Assigning theory and practice to different spheres was questioned on several occasions. Theory as generalizing practice and practice as using theory marry the two together in some important respects. Doing politics was supposed to involve theorizing and – at the other end of the equation – theoretical inquiry was held to be practically motivated. Literature admitted that all IR scholars ‘to a greater or lesser extent do “empirical” work’¹⁷ and that there is a theory-practice linkage rather than separation.¹⁸ This debate is partial if it continues to disregard the fact that both, theory and practice, should be recognised for their capacity to produce knowledge.¹⁹

This dissertation shed some new light on the academia-praxis relationship from sociology of knowledge perspective. Rather than asking whether IR scholarship is or should be relevant for policy, it illustrated how these two realms engage in knowledge production and explored affinities in how knowledge is produced by the ivory tower and in the policy world.

Unicorns were worshipped by the ancient Babylonians, and written descriptions of them appear in texts from the ancient Persians, the Romans, the Greeks and ancient Jewish *scholars*, all describing a horse-like creature whose single horn had magical properties and could heal disease.²⁰

This reference to unicorns is not intended to discredit the idea of international society, nor to denote its falsehood. It is aimed at distorting academia’s claims to higher knowledge and theorists’ aversion to the role of imaginative acts in knowledge production. The Latin word, *academia* refers to a community dedicated to higher learning.²¹ Inevitably, the theory-practice dichotomy reaffirms this elevated position of scholarly knowing. It contributes to the presentation of certain types of knowledge as superior to or more valuable than others.

¹⁶ Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”: 514.

¹⁷ Booth, “Discussion: a reply to Wallace”: 371.

¹⁸ Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”: 515.

¹⁹ Smith did mention that ‘practice is unavoidably theoretical’ and that theories constitute the world but neither did he elaborate on these remarks nor provided examples of what he meant. Nadir pursued a starkly distinct perspective: T. Nardin, “Theorizing and doing as distinct: implications for international relations theory,” in *International Studies Association (ISA) 53rd Annual Convention* (San Francisco: 2013).

²⁰ This quotation derives from The Scotsman, 5 October 2012, *Scotland’s official animal: the Unicorn*, <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/heritage/scottish-fact-of-the-week-scotland-s-official-animal-the-unicorn-1-2564399> (last accessed 27 January 2015).

²¹ M. Lamont, *How professors think: inside the curious world of academic judgment*, Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press: 2009.

This dissertation exposed a puzzling relation between concepts created in IR theory and those circulating in and guiding international politics. The underlying assumption behind naming a particular element of knowledge as theory is that it grants validity and enhances the status of a specific claim. This work argued that no clear dividing line is possible to draw between the way theory and practice create representations of the international. Neither realm is free from generalizations and both engage in discourse formation. Both, if by different means, embark on various forms of validation and persuasion to their viewpoints.

The idea of international society/community gains power in academia and the policy world for not altogether different reasons and not through entirely distinct processes. Images of the international constructed in both domains have some remarkably parallel elements. In representing the international both domains resort to tools beyond logical reasoning, among which aesthetics play an important part.

In both worlds, the academic and the policy, defining the international is intertwined with questions of power. The very fact that a particular group of scholars claims the right to ponder and represent the international is, ultimately, the exposition of power. Power permeates the process of standard setting common in the world of policy practice. Defining what constitutes international standards and who is expected to meet them is an expression of power. In addition it becomes supported with concrete policies and budgets, which are deemed to contribute to the maintenance of international community as it is imagined by policymakers.

A theory arguing for or accounting for a rule-based international order seems harmless. The idea of international society/community expresses the desire for order and simplicity but this approach perpetuates what is considered normal and acceptable in international relations. There is a degree of unacknowledged and possibly unrealised complicity on part of IR theory as it reports on international politics rather than questions it. Steve Smith argued that ‘theorists should question the common sense of the policy debate, and interrogate what passes as the accepted view, thus show how these are not “obvious” and how the commonsensical always reflects the interests of the powerful in society’.²² The international society approach is not entirely well-prepared to reflect critically on political processes precisely because the English School saw their task as observing practice and extracting knowledge on IR from that practice.

²² Smith, “Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace”: 514.

Knowledge production and a political myth

Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness,
but by the style in which they are imagined²³

That ideas are forces to be reckoned with in the international realm is a well-established argument. Ideas ‘make sense of experiences, arouse and direct social consciousness, provide objectives to be sought and prompt action in their pursuit’.²⁴ It is also a widely acknowledged argument that narratives not only explain but also help constitute social realities.²⁵ In this section I intend to discuss why specific representations of the international become powerful.

Several processes contribute to the force of world representations. When they are discursively transformed from ideas into a material reality, a concrete object out there, they become difficult to question. In the process of reification they may also acquire agency. A capacity to act, even if it is only discursively produced, enhances the idea’s power. The application of favourable evaluative-descriptive terms by those producing specific representations, creates and embeds their positive connotations. Representations following Voltaire’s illusion of the ‘best of all possible worlds’ tend to be accepted more readily, especially if they are coherent and aesthetically pleasing. Academic engagement, which produces and commends rather than condemns such representations, enhances their credibility. In order, however, to provide a more thorough account of social processes accompanying the production of specific world representations and thereby to explicate their power, I propose resorting to the concept of a political myth. Scholarship discussing roles and characteristics of a political myth allows me, on the one hand, to return to Charles Manning, one of the founding fathers of IR conceptualisation of international society, and, on the other, to add important nuance to conclusions he reached regarding international society.

Approaching International Relations via the concept of myth has a relatively long pedigree. Two thorough engagements with the concept of a myth in IR are Cynthia Weber’s *International relations theory: a critical introduction* and Benno Teschke’s *The myth of 1648*. The way both authors use myth is geared towards exposing falsehood. The central argument of Weber’s work is that different theories are founded upon myths. Myths,

²³ B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, Rev. ed., London; New York: Verso: 2006 [1983], 6.

²⁴ Foley, *Ideas that shape politics*, 1.

²⁵ Suganami, “British institutionalists, or the English School, 20 years on”: 267.

interpreted as apparent truths, serve to transform the particular and ideological into what appears to be natural and empirical. In Teschke's view, the myth of 1648 should be considered a foundational myth within IR. It is organised around the claim – shared by realists, members of the English School and constructivists – that the Westphalian treaties were the turning point in the creation of modern international relations. In this account, too, a myth is used to denote to falsity and to emphasise possible alternative interpretations of specific events and processes.²⁶ A justificatory function of myths in IR was explored in detail in Buffet and Heuser's edited work.²⁷ In this case, myths were understood as preconceived patterns, simplified representations of the past allowing for the legitimization of policies in the present. This work saw the role of myths in instrumentalist terms. Myths such as those of *Swedish Neutrality*, *European Concert* and the *Division of the World*, were used by journalists and politicians aiming for quick persuasion and appeal. The quest for simplistic and plain explanations as well as to the protective role of myths as 'lessons learned', securely guiding future actions made myths into important devices in politics.

One important aspect remains pushed to the margins by these engagements of IR literature with the concept of a myth. A myth should not be dismissed as false. Sociology of knowledge allows problematizing circumstances accompanying the construction of myths. The concept of a political myth, elaborated by Chiara Bottici, points to specific social processes accompanying the production of narratives, influencing their popularity and longevity. Bottici, instead of following classical theories of political myth presenting it as an object, proposed a relational and phenomenological approach to myths. Bottici's original contribution to the study of political myths is her interpretation of a myth as a process rather than an object or final state of being.²⁸ The narrative dimension is key to myths as it allows for reducing the complexity of social life in order to facilitate comprehension. Political myths are a specific type of a narrative that is believed to be true or acted upon as if it were true. As narratives, political myths provide a sense of cohesiveness, help make sense of experience and define common purpose, thereby shaping collective identity. Political myths, while creating the illusion of simplicity and control, provide significance and grant stimulus for

²⁶ C. Weber, *International relations theory: a critical introduction*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge: 2005; B. Teschke, *The myth of 1648: class, geopolitics, and the making of modern international relations*, London: Verso: 2003.

²⁷ C. Buffet and B. Heuser, *Haunted by history: myths in international relations*, Providence, Oxford: Berghahn Books: 1998.

²⁸ Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*, 132.

action.²⁹ All these elements are components of scholarly and policy practice knowledge production on international politics.

There are affinities between this interpretation of a political myth and Michael Foley's writing about the force of ideas in action. Foley drew attention to the fact that ideas are mutually and in multiple ways related to action. They may be used consciously and intuitively but in both instances they structure experience, shape attitudes and prompt action.³⁰ John H. Kautsky interpreted communism as a myth that, since it was believed in, could condition behaviour. Guided and inspired by such a myth, individuals would behave differently in comparison with their behaviour in the absence of the myth. Hence the myth, argued Kautsky, however false, should be treated as one in possession of real behavioural consequences. The 'subtle interplay of myths and policies' had political consequences since a myth could inspire action or induce political quiescence.³¹

This argument would be incomplete without giving a final nod of appreciation to Charles Manning. This chapter's title, *The fairyland of ideas*, suggests the need to return to Manning's discussion of the nature of international society. Although Manning confusingly presented his approach as empiricist, he deserves credit for recognising the world of politics as a *fairyland of ideas*. Manning's discussion of the nature of international society emphasizes the role of 'assumptions', 'as ifs' and 'make-believe'. His 'social cosmos' was 'notional' in character, it only happened in idea.³² A return to the view of international society as an idea rather than a reified being existing out there and possessing agency is the first step to acknowledging that, as an idea, it may be powerful. As an idea it is not the result of pure logical thinking but its production is stimulated by specific social processes. International society as an idea is not simply a means to representing relations among states. Nor should it be treated as a benign or utilitarian structure as it becomes consequential for the conceptualisation and policies pursued with regard to a state. One important reservation is

²⁹ Bottici emphasized the need to keep myths distinct from religion. Myths, unlike religion, do not need to explain the meaning of life in general, they solely need to be significant. There are affinities between historical narratives and myths but not all historical narratives can be regarded as myths. A narrative unavoidably alters the content, thus mythical and historical narratives cannot be juxtaposed as real versus fictitious. Accounts of significant events such as the French Revolution have been working as political myths only in certain contexts. Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*.

³⁰ Foley, *Ideas that shape politics*, 1.

³¹ J. H. Kautsky, *Communism and the politics of development: persistent myths and changing behavior*, New York ; London: Wiley: 1968. Kautsky relied on three interrelated concepts: Georges Sorel's 'myth', Murray Edelman's 'symbolic reassurance' and Robert K. Merton's 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. He did not approach 'myth' in an exactly same way Sorel did. Sorel allied his 'myth' with revolutionary movements, while Kautsky found myths to be the expression of the will to act.

³² Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 201.

that Manning presented the idea as believed in by *all* engaged in the ‘game of states’ and failed, thereby, to acknowledge the potential multiplicity of representations, each informed by specific standpoints, ideologies and differing objectives.

Despite Bottici’s claim that the work of a political myth under contemporary conditions is potentially global,³³ the idea of international society/community cannot be claimed to be a myth shared across the world. It functions as a myth predominantly among particular sets of actors, specific communities of practitioners and institutions collectively producing and upholding the myth. It finds particularly fertile ground in societies subscribing to liberal values and leaning towards cosmopolitan ideals. As a myth it answers the needs of societies animated by the ideology of progress and good doing.³⁴

The practice of statebuilding is informed and reinforced by the myth of international community. International community, as a political myth, normalizes a particular state model as the only conceivable option and international statebuilding as a natural and desirable political practice. The myth of international community not only conveys the message of what is right, it also answers and fulfils popular expectations of what is right. International community is reassuring and gives a promise of making intelligible what is different or odd. The myth of international community allows addressing the perennial call that ‘something must be done’ in the face of widespread suffering. It thus caters to the imperative of ‘saving strangers’ and perpetuates the feeling of righteousness among those who *do* the helping.

The myth of international community feeds on the rhetoric of responsibilities and obligations towards its members. It is fused with ideas of progress, benevolence and purpose. To sustain the notion of a community, there is a need for a common and conscious objective, which, in this case, is assistance in the achievement of development and/or progress.³⁵ Having a purpose is considered uplifting. The aim of development, which can be pursued by international community is, naturally, a fleeting target and thus, ultimately, illusory. This, however, is an asset rather than a disadvantage. The fact that this goal is simultaneously never ending and unattainable is perversely appealing. The purpose-driven culture motivated by the relentless desire for progress is reassured by the prospect of an everlasting goal.

³³ Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*, 202.

³⁴ This analysis has been focused on specific actors – those engaged in statebuilding – but could be extended. The myth of international community is an important part of how the West sees and constructs itself to itself and projects this image to the outside world.

³⁵ There is a clear analogy here with the 19th century idea of progress, which in the US and Western Europe worked as a ‘motivating faith in movement towards a positive good’ M. Foley, “Progress”, in *Ideas that shape politics*, ed. M. Foley (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 222.

The notion of international community gives purpose, becomes the tangible goal and the result of cooperation. It allows for maintaining actors' identity and the perception of themselves as co-operating, caring and responsible. Statebuilding thus becomes an exercise in *bonding* between highly developed states, just as much as it is an activity of *helping* 'fragile' states. Helping, building and developing are all elements enabled and reinforced by the myth of international community and the constant process of its creation.

In the academic world, the myth of international society secured the claim to significance that a group of scholars was making in the discipline of IR. Arguments about international society were often presented in a defensive manner, subsumed under the chief objective of defending the English School as an autonomous academic pursuit. The frightening prospect of the 'non-existence of the English school'³⁶ may have contributed to the consolidation of interpretations of international society.

The paradigm of the English School thought has been influenced by socio-historical circumstances. Apart from developments in international politics, which undoubtedly had a significant bearing on the thinking trajectories, historical circumstances related to the development of IR as an academic discipline played a role in the way the English School scholarship developed. The reification of international society may have been an unintended result of the ambition to come up with an interpretative framework or a theory of international relations distinct from realism or transgressing realism and liberalism's shortcomings. Reification has been the fruit of social process accompanying the rise of IR as an academic discipline and an element of a conscious undertaking of a group of scholars, aimed at positioning the English School within IR. The debate on international society was developing at a time when IR was only just confirming its place in the academia. The way international society figured in these debates was consistent with the interests linked to the position the English School aspired to occupy within that new field. Especially in its early years the English School was keen to establish its place and distinguish itself from American IR, as exemplified by the following quotation: 'The British have probably been more concerned with the historical than the contemporary, with the normative than the scientific, with the philosophical than the methodological, with the principles than policy'.³⁷

This process continued also at a time when IR started making a spectacular career at universities. This, however, was not a guarantor of the English School success. Concerned

³⁶ Wilson, "The English School of International Relations: A Reply to Sheila Grader": 51.

³⁷ Butterfield and Wight, eds., *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*.

with dwindling interest in international society analysis and amid claims that IR was an *American* social science, James Mayall attempted a reinvigoration: ‘Despite its current unpopularity, a strong case could be made for reviving the traditional debate about international society’. Not only did he endow the debate with the aura of tradition but added: ‘I reassert the concept of “international society” as central to international theory’.³⁸

Tim Dunne is another prominent author whose work was largely aimed at positioning the English School in the mainstream of IR and exposing the school’s potential to contribute to the discipline’s development. The question inspiring Dunne’s first book – *Inventing international society* - and indeed Dunne’s research agenda, has been that of the place and value of the English School for IR theory.³⁹ It exposes Dunne’s commitment to the defence of the School as a legitimate and fruitful framework within IR study.⁴⁰

Academic writing is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge on international politics but this does not exclude other objectives, such as the need to cultivate a research tradition and to keep a research programme going. This goal is greatly facilitated by the myth of international society. This myth has a utilitarian function as it continues assisting scholars in positioning their research within the social realm of IR scholarly practice. It gave the body of scholarship termed the English School significance in IR studies and has been helping the English School make its claim to significance in the discipline of IR.

The myth of the Russian World reinforces Russia’s sister identities of a distinctive Eurasian civilisation, where the emphasis is on culture, language and religion, and of a self-proclaimed leading Eurasian great power with a special role within the post-Soviet area and a significant global standing. In the latter case the emphasis is on geopolitics. The Russian World is an idea that helps position the Russian Federation on the world map in a specific way. It allows Russia to claim a role in determining the direction of world affairs. The power of this myth goes beyond the justification of status claims. Discursive uses of the idea endow Russia with great powerness, thereby erasing the need for this status to be acknowledged by

³⁸ Hoffmann, “An American social science: international relations”; J. Mayall, “International society and international theory”, in *The reason of states: a study in international political theory*, ed. M.D. Donelan (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978).

³⁹ *Inventing international society: a history of the English school* focused on introducing the work of a group of scholars, the institutional arrangement which assembled them (The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics) and their jointly published key volume - *The diplomatic investigations* Butterfield and Wight, eds., *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics*.

⁴⁰ It was assisted by a journal article exposing the theoretical potential behind international society and reasserting ‘the continued relevance of the international society tradition to contemporary international relations thinking’. T. Dunne, “International Society: Theoretical Promises Fulfilled?”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 30: 2, 1995.

others, primarily the West. The idea provides Russia with significance and gives a sense of direction to the political elite and possibly the society at large. Russia acquires not only a sense of direction but also an elevating civilizational mission. The myth of the Russian World does not emerge spontaneously. It is a process actively promoted by the ruling elite as one of its most immediate functions is to justify particular foreign policy actions.

Despite many attempts, in place since the early nineteenth century, to hold valid only enquiry amenable to scientific verification, and render myths and the need for them meaningless, myths have not withered away. The complexity of modern societies exacerbates the need for a symbolic mediation of political experience: ‘political phenomena transcending the individual’s horizon of experience need to be imagined even more in order to be experienced’.⁴¹ However much we would prefer to see myths as a part of ordinary, everyday life or pertaining to folklore and thus not reaching the purportedly higher level of academic accuracy or the authority accorded to policy, they are in fact elements of the process of knowledge production.⁴² The enterprise of producing knowledge involves the construction of political myths and neither academia nor the policy world is free from it.

Viewpoints and the limits of theorising

Coherent theories in an incoherent world are either silly and uninteresting or oppressive and problematic, depending on the degree of hegemony they manage to achieve. Coherent theories in an apparently coherent world are even more dangerous, for the world is always more complex than such unfortunately hegemonic theories can grasp⁴³

Despite contemporary maps’ pretence to objectivity, based on their claim to be the outcome of a scientific enterprise, no standardized and universally accepted map of the world exists today.⁴⁴ Albrecht Penck’s ambitious International Map of the World project suffered defeat. The spirit of global cooperation that underpinned the initial idea and Penck’s hopes that the ‘international community’ would be able to work together to produce a uniform world map withered away despite the United Nations involvement in the project.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*, 132.

⁴² Foley, *Ideas that shape politics*, 1; Foley, “Progress”, 208.

⁴³ S. G. Harding, *The science question in feminism*, Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press: 1986, 164.

⁴⁴ Brotton, *A history of the world in twelve maps*, 439.

⁴⁵ Brotton, *Great maps*, 213.

One other prominent map project merits a mention towards the end of this thesis. Just like the theoretical approach this thesis engaged with, it too claimed to be premised on the idea of equality of all nations. In 1973 Arno Peters, a German historian, unveiled his map guided by what he termed the Peters Projection. *The Guardian* newspaper heralded it as the ‘Brave New World’ and described as ‘the most honest projection of the world yet devised’. Harper’s Magazine called the map ‘The Real World’. The equality of all nations was premised on Peters’ claim to have retained the ‘correct’ dimensions of countries and continents. This was a significant attack on the Mercator’s projection, still in vogue at that time. Peters’ map became one of the bestselling world maps but also one vehemently criticised by cartographers. British academia dismissed it with labels such as cartographic deception, absurd and nonsense. Both sides, cartographers on the one and Peters on the other, claimed objective truth but:

invariably this objectivity quickly unravelled to disclose more subjective beliefs and vested personal and institutional interests. Gradually the debate turned into a deeper reflection on the nature of mapmaking. Were there established criteria for assessing worldmaps (...)? What happened when a map was accepted by the public at large but rejected by the cartographic profession (...) What was an “accurate” map of the world, and what was the role of maps in society?’⁴⁶

Just as maps, representations of the international are not solely historically contingent but depend on a viewpoint. A point of view, in turn, relies on much more than the time-period of a theory’s creation. Bourdieu, referring back to Leibnitz, persuasively argued that there was no ‘absolute point of view from which the world presents itself as a spectacle, a unified and unitary spectacle, the view without a point of view’.⁴⁷ Since the God’s-eye view on the world is not available, knowledge of political reality will always be incomplete.⁴⁸ Any representation will necessarily be speaking from a specific vantage point.⁴⁹ A viewpoint, contingent upon the experience and interpretation of history, prevalent values, approaches to knowledge and social processes accompanying its production, will be ever changing. A defence of a particular vision as universal or necessarily good is a violation of the right to see international affairs through various prisms and from varied standpoints.

⁴⁶ The quotation as well as the paragraph’s reference to the Peters’ map is based on Brotton, A history of the world in twelve maps, 378-384.

⁴⁷ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*, 115-116.

⁴⁸ H. Arendt, *The life of the mind*, London: Secker & Warburg: 1978.

⁴⁹ van der Ree, “The Politics of Scientific Representation in International Relations”. See also: B. C. Van Fraassen, *Scientific representation: paradoxes of perspective*, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 2008.

Bull recognised that international theory may apply solely to some particular period in history, particular state or group of states:

By theory of international politics we may understand the body of general propositions that may be advanced about political relations between states. (...) Such propositions need *not* be general (...) They may be general statements which apply only to some particular condition of international society⁵⁰

But, in problematizing the requirement for generality, Bull remained committed to the view of the international as a society of states. Despite allowing for realism and revolutionism to represent certain features of world more accurately, he remained, paraphrasing Mannheim's words, sensitive only to certain aspects of international politics and not entirely concerned that the interpretation from the point of view of a different state may be different.⁵¹

The continued engagement with powerful world images, produced by theory and policy discourse, and the processes accompanying and structuring their production is necessary. Following Harding in her dismissal of theories as *uninteresting* may be as detrimental as claims attesting to their neutrality. Harding, whose words serve as the motto for these concluding remarks, rightly pointed out that coherent theories are unattainable. But she was not entirely correct in casting them as dull. In the first place, theories or specific analytical approaches continue impacting the direction of debates in IR. Secondly, the need for theoretical frameworks has unrelenting resonance as theories are the source of significance for large swathes of IR scholarship.⁵²

Proponents and explorers of the idea of international society added important qualifications to their work. Andrew Hurrell, for instance, argued that broad images of the world, and particularly those shaping politics, should be subject to academic scrutiny.⁵³ Ian Clark noted that according agency to international society depends on 'unacceptable

⁵⁰ Bull, "The theory of international politics 1919-1969", 30.

⁵¹ Bull offered a correction in his later writing on the revolt against the West, see: Bull, "The Revolt Against the West".

⁵² An illustrative example has been a January 2015 talk at Aberystwyth University at which Colin Wight defended the need for a theoretical framework to discuss phenomena such as the Occupy Movement, technological change and the WikiLeaks. White described himself as a professional theorist. Guest talk 'Revolution and Reform in the Information Age' organised by The David Davies Memorial Institute, 12 January 2015.

⁵³ A. Hurrell, "One world? Many worlds? The place of regions in the study of international society", *International Affairs*, 83: 1, 2007.

assumptions about international society homogeneity, and ends with hopeless reification'.⁵⁴ Authors underlined that assumptions about international society homogeneity are unacceptable, nor should one take neat and tidy arrangements of the global system for granted.⁵⁵

The language of “international order” (...) is never politically neutral. Indeed a capacity to produce and project proposals, conceptions, and theories of order is a central part of the practice of power.⁵⁶

These authors should be praised for calling attention to the homogeneity problem. Nevertheless, the expression of these fundamental doubts did not go hand in hand with the exploration of their consequences. A careful discussion has not taken place of what becomes of the idea of international society if one decides to take these qualifications on board. Scholars expressed these concerns but never embraced them. These fundamental observations were treated as a caveat, a reservation, rather than *the* key element. Ian Clark's most recent publication, for instance, acknowledges the possible negative consequences of international society. International society should be understood, Clark argues, as encompassing a range of formations both benign and malign in consequence. This critique points to negative outcomes but they are ascribed to international society's power to 'socialize' not only the positive but also the negative, to develop practices around 'deformities' of international politics.⁵⁷ Still missing is the discussion of potential negative effects of producing schematic yet powerful representations of the international and the consequences these ideas have.

Hedley Bull acknowledged:

all discussions of international politics ... proceed upon theoretical assumptions which we should acknowledge and investigate rather than ignore or leave unchallenged. The enterprises of theoretical investigation is at its minimum one directed towards criticism: towards identifying, formulating, refining, and questioning the general assumptions on which the everyday discussion of international politics proceeds. At its maximum, the enterprises is concerned with theoretical construction: with establishing that certain assumptions are true while others are false, certain

⁵⁴ Clark, *The vulnerable in international society*.

⁵⁵ Hurrell, "One world? Many worlds? The place of regions in the study of international society"; Clark, *The vulnerable in international society*.

⁵⁶ Hurrell, *On global order: power, values, and the constitution of international society*, 20.

⁵⁷ Clark, *The vulnerable in international society*, 19.

arguments valid while others are invalid, and so proceeding to erect a firm structure of knowledge⁵⁸

This quotation reveals that Bull was a supporter of contestation but also a firm believer in the potency of theory and the possibility for theoretical advancement. He clearly proceeded from a standpoint of one, rather than many knowledges.

IR theory, if it is to have continued relevance, should derive its relevance and strength from the reflection upon its own status and from the incessant consideration of its own limitations and processes of knowledge production it arises from. It should also pay more attention to the consequences of knowledges it produces. To paraphrase what Bourdieu suggested in relation to sociology: IR needs to use its own gains to monitor itself.⁵⁹ Reflection on one's own research frameworks and tools should be a normal rather than extraordinary part of scholarly engagement with international politics. In IR consensus cannot be reached on the fundamental questions, let alone what the answers are. But, *how* questions are asked is, too, of enormous consequence. The way we formulate questions already directs our study and discloses certain presuppositions about international politics.

If *the political* is associated with plurality, contestation and conflict, international society as a research framework depoliticizes the interpretation of the international realm as it precludes other possible ways of viewing international relations. International society has become central to much of IR theorising about the world to the extent that it may seem almost nonsensical to deny that there is such a thing as a society of states. It has also been a dominant problematic for English School scholarship as an interpretative framework through which world politics lends itself to be studied and as a phenomenon existing out there. International society ceased to be a representation and became normalcy, it became natural and unquestioned. Taking on an aura of self-evidence, it became difficult to have a critical view of it or simply an outsiders' view. Representing the international as a social whole removes politics from the practice of representing the international realm for it impinges on the right to interpret the international from various perspectives. It can be argued that producing a coherent scholarly discourse requires generalization. The danger is when we forget that we are generalizing. Representing international society as a contingent historical fact, a spatial entity or as a timeless and universally applicable theory are instances of

⁵⁸ Bull, "The theory of international politics 1919-1969", 57.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, *Science of science and reflexivity*.

reification. The dangers of such reification are related to the fact that this view has been expressed from the position of authority accorded to the academia.

To be able to claim we want to engage with the world, we have to be ready and willing to look at it from different perspectives. It is important not only to address common questions and to agree that IR study should be informed by history. It is crucial to acknowledge that there exist different questions informed by distinct experience and interpretation of history. These suggestions allow for a simple conclusion that we should not organise our thinking in terms of looking for an ideal answer, the aim is for the discussion never to close.

Afterword

All too often do maps and political representations of the world accept and try to reveal the reality of an external world, despite the fact that perspectives and hence perceptions of that world differ. There is an autobiographical aspect to research which culminated in the thesis. Back in 2008, when tsunami and flooding hit Burma, I was just beginning to adjust to the role of humanitarian aid worker in the development cooperation department. I intended to make use of the humanitarian aid budget and start the procedure for overseas humanitarian assistance. I was, however, held back by my superiors with this argument: ‘No, we cannot start sending out the airplane just yet, *they* have not asked *the international community* for assistance’. This was the exposition of a very common pattern in the practice of development cooperation, where international community acquired material form and tangible consequences, becoming a strain on financial flows and a barrier for airplanes to set off. *The international community*, which could be *addressed* and whose agential powers were strong enough to organise humanitarian action in order to save the lives of thousands, has since then not stopped perplexing me.

Two years later, I was teaching the *Introduction to IR theories* to a group of students in Kyrgyzstan. The students were the least persuaded by one particular theoretical approach we discussed – that of international society advanced by the English School. In 2010 Kyrgyzstan was still very much entangled in the war in Afghanistan, it had just survived a revolution, followed by ethnic violence and Russia’s refusal to intervene despite Kyrgyzstan’s request. With American and Russian military bases just outside the capital, the country was expected, on the one hand, to be democratizing and, on the other, to subject itself to Russia’s political guidance. This was not a particularly stimulating environment to be persuaded by the image of the world produced by international society scholarship. This was also a period when, as an aspiring researcher, I was working on a problem of Kyrgyzstan’s borders. Following my interviews, it was clear that interviewees understood the border and its functions in starkly dissimilar ways. There was no one ‘border’, it meant different things to different people. Seminars with students and my first research experience prompted me to reflect on the construction of knowledge and the power of representation. Even concepts deemed *fundamental* for the study and practice of international relations, such as the border or the state, may acquire different meanings and significance through social processes of knowledge production. This autobiographical afterword reflects on experiences which conditioned my

thinking, affected the subjective process of designing the research framework, composing and modifying the research question and which influenced my attempt at drawing conclusions.

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III. List of interviewees' host institutions

- Rossotrudnichestvo
- the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Federation
- the Russian Academy of Sciences
- Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO
- Saint-Petersburg State University
- Moscow State University
- Aberystwyth University
- International Studies Association, English School Section
- European, American and Japanese aid agencies in Kyrgyzstan